



WAY OF CHOICES

BOOK 12

Mao Ni

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

Way of Choices

(Ze Tian ji)

(择天记)

by

Mao Ni

(猫腻)

Synopsis

To pick is to choose. This is a story about choices. Three thousand worlds full of gods and demons, with a daoist scroll in your hand, you are able to control the entire universe...

At the beginning of time, a mystical meteor came crashing down from outer space and scattered all over the world. A piece of it landed in the Eastern Continent. There were mysterious totems carved upon the meteor. Through viewing these totems, mankind comprehended the Dao and established the Orthodoxy.

Several thousand years later, the fourteen years old orphan Chen Changsheng left his master to cure his illness and change his fate. He brought a part of a marriage vow with him to the capital, thus beginning the journey of a rising hero...

Copyright

All rights reserved.

English Translation Hypersheep325; Pipipingu, Translator Emeritus @ [Binggo&Corp Translations](#)

Translations Edits by bbkgs @ [Binggo&Corp Translations](#)

ePub conversion by Lisa Hayes @ [Hasseno Blog](#)

This is a free eBook. You are free to give it away (in unmodified form) to whomever you wish.

No part of this eBook may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Chapter 1101 – An Agreement on Ten Years

The sky in the Garden of Zhou was lower than the sky in the real world. It was much easier to use one's eyes to measure distance.

As Chen Changsheng fell from Sunset Valley to the ground, he could clearly see that he was rapidly getting farther away from the azure sky.

The biting cold winds hacked at his cheeks like knives, making him recall how he had been pursued by Nanke's two wings several years ago. He had burst out of the lake and seemed about to be killed, but then a hand had come out of the night sky, grabbed his collar, and taken him far away.

Alas, Xu Yourong was not in the Garden of Zhou today, so she naturally could not grab him.

Fortunately, water grass and lakes could be found all over the ground below Sunset Valley, leaving him some hope.

A massive boom went off by his ear.

The soft surface of the lake had become incomparably firm, and messages of pain were sent from every part of his body into his brain.

At that moment, he felt like all the bones in his body were on the verge of breaking.

Countless green waves of cold lake water incessantly slapped against his face.

He once more thought about his escape through the lake water all those years ago.

Blood trickled from his lips, spreading out in the water and creating a faintly pink mist.

Several hundred fish swam out from the surrounding grass, almost madly swimming into the mist of blood, shuttling in and

out of it.

After his fate was changed by the Tianhai Divine Empress, his blood was no longer that fragrant yet toxic candy, but it still presented unimaginable benefits.

Any level of being instinctively wanted to get close to his blood.

A desire to get close was at times simply greed. There was not much difference between the two.

The fish madly swimming toward the mist of blood were like some humans. In the face of enormous temptation, they simply had no intelligence to speak of.

Those who were truly mentally disabled, on the contrary, would not suffer as easily from this temptation.

In his dazed state, Chen Changsheng thought of these meaningless questions, and then he ultimately thought about Nanke.

He closed his eyes and quietly lay at the bottom of the water.

Water grass slowly waved around him, occasionally bumping against his feet.

It was like the hand of a devil probing out of the void to drag him into the bottomless abyss.

He opened his eyes.

Very little time had passed from his daze to his waking.

The surface of the lake had still not completely calmed.

Chen Changsheng raised his head to the surface of the water and began to move.

His feet moved with unimaginable speed, stirring up two dragons of water of astonishing momentum.

With a gush, a white pillar of water surged out of the lake, a waterfall in reverse.

Chen Changsheng landed on the shore of the lake, intending to charge toward a small lake to the northeast.

This small lake led to the world on the other side of the Garden of Zhou.

As long as he could reach that side and use the remnants of sword intent left by the Heaven Shrouding Sword, he could hide himself for a time.

He needed some time to ponder just what had happened, or at least to stabilize his wounds.

But he suddenly stopped and turned.

Shang Xingzhou was standing on the other side, impassively watching him.

Chen Changsheng's face was rather pale.

He was born stainless, had undergone a perfect Purification in the Orthodox Academy, and had bathed in dragon blood under New North Bridge. Other than the Demon Lord, no one else had a tougher body than his. Coupled with that alteration at the most critical moment, he had been able to survive his fall from Sunset Valley to the ground ten-some li away.

But he had still suffered significant injuries.

His bones had not broken, but they were showing cracks, and the pain had already thoroughly penetrated down to his marrow.

Crucially, his sea of consciousness had suffered a massive shock and his Dao heart was impossible to pacify for the moment.

Most despairing of all was that he had no sword, not even a sword sheath.

This meant that he could not summon the thousands of swords within the sheath.

He had spent the last few days in the Li Palace's stone chamber diligently practicing the sword, quietly contemplating the

profound, and adjusting his body to its peak state precisely for today's fight.

He had prepared a great deal for today's fight.

The three swords that Su Li had passed to him, the sword intents he had experienced at Mount Li, and the sword array and sword-dividing arts of South Stream Temple had all been melded into one by him.

He was confident that in his best state, he was worthy to challenge his master in the Garden of Zhou.

But when the fight had just begun, he had lost his sword.

All his swords.

In the last few years, he had defeated so many powerful foes by relying on the sword.

He was regarded by the common people as a genius of the sword, many of them even thinking that he was already a grandmaster.

But if he didn't have a sword, what could he do? What could he be?

The current question was this: how had Shang Xingzhou been able to snatch away all his swords just by stretching out his hand?

To Chen Changsheng, this was not a question. It was just that after all those years, he had forgotten about a few things.

Many years ago, Shang Xingzhou had cut off the Golden Dragon's whisker and forged it into a sword which he gave to his disciple.

This was the Stainless Sword that had remained at Chen Changsheng's side for many years.

The sword sheath had also been a precious treasure of the Li Palace: the Vault Sheath.

It was Shang Xingzhou who had taken it away and then given it to him.

Shang Xingzhou had spoken correctly.

The Stainless Sword and the Vault Sheath had both been given by him to Chen Changsheng.

Even the engagement with Xu Yourong had been given by him to Chen Changsheng.

After Yuren rejected it.

Since he had given everything to Chen Changsheng, he could naturally take it back at any time.

He had the right, and also the ability.

This was unquestionably the most formidable winning move.

Though this move seemed to have been hidden a little too deeply...

So deep that it made one's heart go cold.

From when he received that dagger in Xining Village's old temple until now, around ten years had passed?

Shang Xingzhou's next words were even more chilling.

"How old are you this year?"

Chen Changsheng was his student, raised by him in Xining Village.

But he did not know Chen Changsheng's age.

Whether it was deliberately or unintentionally, it was still a cold indifference.

Chen Changsheng replied, "No matter how old I am, I've passed the age of twenty."

Shang Xingzhou cared not for the deeper meaning in these words. He said, "My talent truly is inferior to yours, so let us add ten years."

Chen Changsheng understood what he meant. After a pause, he

said, "Okay."

Between the thirty-year-old Shang Xingzhou and the twenty-year-old Chen Changsheng, who was stronger?

Nobody would know.

Even after today's fight, still nobody would know.

Because Chen Changsheng had no sword.

Splash!

Water gushed.

The fish had pursued the mist of blood to the surface.

The roiling water looked lively and joyful, but looking at it too long would make one feel disgusted.

Several flowers of blood bloomed on the water, the remnants of fish sinking down.

Shang Xingzhou had vanished from the opposite shore.

Chen Changsheng had also disappeared.

A footprint appeared in the water grass.

A second footprint appeared farther off.

The footprints had appeared from nowhere. There was no connection between them, making the sight extremely strange.

By the time Chen Changsheng appeared again, he was several hundred zhang away, next to a forest.

And when Shang Xingzhou appeared again, he was right in front of Chen Changsheng.

Even using the Yeshi Step, he had still not been able to surpass Shang Xingzhou's movement techniques.

What about fists then?

A picture appeared in his sea of consciousness.

Bie Yanghong quietly gazing at him, the tip of his finger touching his brow.

Thousands of pictures followed, coming thick and fast.

Streams of light could be seen in these pictures, each of them a fist.

The pictures vanished.

Thousands of streams of light became one.

Thousands of fists became one fist.

Chen Changsheng clenched his hand into a fist and smashed at that face that was both familiar and unfamiliar.

Chapter 1102 – Moving the Body Like a Sword

In White Emperor City, Bie Yanghong had used the supreme technique of Xiling's Ten Thousand Years Pavilion, A Point of Red, to pour all he had experienced in his battle with the Angels of Sacred Light into Chen Changsheng's mind. Within was the essence of the fist style that he had habitually used in his last few years.

In the past, Bie Yanghong had not been in the habit of using his fists.

But in the battle of the Mausoleum of Books, he had personally witnessed the momentum of the Tianhai Divine Empress's fist, which seemed like it could destroy the world. Enlightened, he created this fist style.

This did not mean that he was surrendering to the Tianhai Divine Empress. On the contrary, this attitude of learning from an expert was what it meant to truly be fearless.

A fearless fist possessed unfathomable power.

When Chen Changsheng punched, the air in a several-hundred-zhang radius around him moved with his fist, creating a fierce gale.

The forest bent as one behind him, expressing its reverence.

Shang Xingzhou could also not avoid this fearless fist.

But he caught it.

There was a massive explosion, casting grass, water, and mud into the air, blocking out the sun and sky.

The forest slowly straightened and the fierce gale faded.

The terrifying pressure had compressed the soft ground

downward, leaving it countless times harder.

Chen Changsheng's fist had been stopped in his palm, unable to press forward.

If he still had the Vault Sheath, Chen Changsheng could think of ten-some methods of launching a fierce assault on Shang Xingzhou.

But now, he did not even have a sword.

Fortunately, this did not mean that he could not strike with a sword.

The temperature on the edge of the plains began to rapidly rise, the nearby grass even beginning to yellow.

Chen Changsheng was using his mightiest and most resolute move, the Blazing Sword.

The true essence in his body began to madly blaze. Traveling through his right arm that was now a sword, it surged in an endless torrent toward Shang Xingzhou.

Shang Xingzhou's expression did not change in the slightest. It remained a visage of cold indifference.

He was a majestic mountain, seemingly unmovable.

A vigorous power emerged from his palm.

Chen Changsheng's fist could not advance a single inch.

This vigorous power was rather special. It did not seem condensed from star radiance. It seemed even more intense, seemed to have a true heat.

From its external appearance, it looked rather like the true essence mobilized by Chen Changsheng's Blazing Sword.

Chen Changsheng guessed at a certain possibility and was shocked.

But he did not have time to think, because Shang Xingzhou's

counterattack was here.

It was just like at the peak of Sunset Valley.

Shang Xingzhou's right hand seemed to casually descend, a fallen leaf on the wind, without any rhyme or reason.

Chen Changsheng still found it impossible to avoid.

Shang Xingzhou's right hand landed on his stomach, gentle, yet containing the strength of the world.

Two deep furrows appeared in the hard, just-compressed ground.

Chen Changsheng retreated to the edge of these furrows, and when his calves hit the ground, his entire body was sent flying.

He was like a stone that had been tossed out by a strong man. As it whistled through the sky, it became a little black dot.

Shang Xingzhou's gaze moved with it and stopped several li away.

For some reason, he was not at all happy, nor was he as indifferent as before. Instead, he creased his brow.

A cool breeze stirred and his sleeves fluttered. Transforming into a wisp of smoke, he rushed toward that place.

.....

.....

Several li away, Chen Changsheng lay facedown in the water, looking much like a corpse.

Suddenly, he turned around and rose. Not even turning his head to glance back, he began to madly run forward.

He was as fast as a galloping horse, leaving a trail of splashes in his wake. However, one could vaguely make out that his right arm was rather stiff as if it had been injured.

No one could possibly receive two of Shang Xingzhou's palms and walk away, even if his cultivation level had to be suppressed in the

Garden of Zhou.

That Chen Changsheng was still alive and could still run was not solely because of the toughness of his body. It was also because Shang Xingzhou's two palms had not completely struck true.

In the final moments before Shang Xingzhou's two palms landed, he brought his arm up to block.

Though he had no sword, he had still used a sword.

Before he had used the Blazing Sword, he had already used the Stupid Sword.

The number one defensive sword technique in the world.

Moreover, though he could not avoid Shang Xingzhou's palm that descended like a falling leaf, he could choose where the attack sent him.

He could also choose how to discharge the force of the attack.

He had even used the Yeshi Step another time while in the air.

As a result, he knew where he had landed.

He was already in the Plains of the Unsetting Sun, precisely where he wanted to go.

Upon confirming that he could not throw off Shang Xingzhou using the Yeshi Step, he had begun preparing for what came next.

It now seemed that he had succeeded.

The increasing number of howls and rustles from within the plains seemed to be cheering him on.

In truth, those were the monsters of the plains catching a whiff of his odor and coming to greet him.

The monsters quickly sensed Shang Xingzhou.

Despite their excessive fear, the monsters still drummed up their courage and rushed forward.

Ten-some dragon snakes swam around the water grass, wiping away Chen Changsheng's tracks.

Even more dragon snakes, giving off their awful stench, silently and stealthily began to make their way toward Shang Xingzhou several li away.

Several black dots appeared off in the distant sky, most likely the demon vultures hurrying over.

It could be believed that in a short while, a tide of monsters would drown out the plain.

But this was not Chen Changsheng's original intent.

Risking being tracked down by Shang Xingzhou, he shouted, "Retreat!"

.....

.....

Shang Xingzhou was currently standing in a lonesome patch of reeds that was being lightly blown to and fro by the wind.

He listened to the subtle sounds from within the water and sensed the Qis concealed in the plains. Raising his brow, he said, "Evil beasts, seeking your death."

At this moment, a thunderous boom reverberated across the plains.

It was Chen Changsheng's voice.

Shang Xingzhou's raised brows gradually dropped back down.

He was somewhat surprised.

.....

.....

No monster dared to disobey Chen Changsheng's orders.

Because he was the master of the Garden of Zhou, but more

because he had saved this world.

The obedience these monsters felt to him came from both their soul and nature.

Upon hearing his order, even the most vicious and untamable Wind Wolves silently retreated.

In front of the Mausoleum of Zhou, the massive figures of the Mountain-toppling Fiend and the Monster Bull glanced at each other and lowered their bodies once more.

The plains returned to silence, the only sounds left the buzzing of insects and the gentle sloshing of water.

Chen Changsheng's feet struck solid ground.

The white grass served as the path, a frosty white before him. The old and run-down temple was still in its original place.

He ran to the old temple and sat himself behind where the idol used to sit.

His breathing was heavy, his face pale.

He took the needles from his fingers and thrust them into two Qi openings on his neck, after which he closed his eyes and began to meditate.

Shang Xingzhou with his cultivation suppressed was not the strongest opponent he had faced in his life, but he did give him the greatest pressure.

Even facing Zhu Luo in Xunyang City or the Demon Lord in Mount Han had not been so hard to bear as today's fight.

Not much time had passed between the peak of Sunset Valley and the old temple, and they had only exchanged two rounds, but he was already exhausted to the extreme.

This was probably the mental pressure one had to endure when a student challenged their teacher.

Though it was hard to say how long he could last or just where it was he wanted to get to.

Chen Changsheng suddenly opened his eyes.

Shang Xingzhou had come to the temple.

Chapter 1103 – [Meeting on the Path and Exchanging Hatred Through the Eyes](#)

Chen Changsheng's breathing became extremely steady, the interval between each one extremely long but not completely vanishing. It seemed very natural.

...Just like a fish swimming amongst the rocks in the stream, moving in a way that would attract no one's notice.

He was even in the mood to glance at the sky outside the temple.

The sky was blue and tinged with a few wispy clouds. It was beautiful.

A black dot could be seen on the edge of the cloud layer, probably the demon vultures responsible for keeping watch.

Following his orders, the countless monsters were hiding in the sea of grass and did not approach the White Grass Path.

He knew that his master was powerful and frightening. Even if the monster assault could buy him some time and a few advantages, the monsters would have to pay a massive price, perhaps dyeing the entire sea of grass red. Moreover, just like he had said to the people in the Mausoleum of Books, since this was a matter between master and disciple, it should be resolved by the two of them. There was no need to drag in the entire world.

Shang Xingzhou had agreed to his request and taken back all the things he had granted him.

He had even directly said that his talent was worse than Chen Changsheng's, so he had added ten years.

He was very frank and calm.

Only by competing in terms of capability could this match between master and disciple be considered truly fair.

But there were some things that Chen Changsheng could not understand.

He had a stainless constitution, had perfectly undergone Purification and Ethereal Opening, and he had even connected all one hundred and eight Qi openings during Star Condensation. If he was only missing out on the tempering that came through time, lacking the resources and experience of fighting experts, why was the gap between him and his master still so vast?

It had nothing to do with modesty, self-confidence, or sentimentality.

In terms of wisdom and logic, he found it impossible to accept this fact.

Shang Xingzhou's palm techniques were very profound, but what about that strength?

Just what was this strength that was beneath the Divine Domain but seemed able to break through the upper limit of the laws?

Chen Changsheng looked at the sky outside the temple and thought about these questions.

The sun slowly circling around the Plains of the Unsetting Sun appeared in that part of the sky, forcing its way into his field of vision.

This red sun was not blinding and it gave off no real heat.

The sun of the Garden of Zhou was fake.

In the world outside, however, there was a real sun.

That sun gave off unimaginable heat, exuding a limitless and infinite light.

Chen Changsheng suddenly understood.

Shang Xingzhou cultivated tens of thousands of Daoist techniques, but the foundation of his true essence was not the traditional Orthodoxy technique of star radiance. It was the

Blazing Sun Style!

But couldn't only the Chen Imperial clan cultivate that technique?

Suddenly, the black hair at Chen Changsheng's temple began to curl.

The surrounding temperature began to rapidly rise, the incense table producing faint blue sparks.

It was like an actual sun had appeared in this run-down temple!

Without hesitation, Chen Changsheng sent his left hand striking out behind him while his feet pressed against the remnants of the idol, allowing him to ram through the back wall of the temple.

With a bang, he transformed into a blur, vanishing into the sea of grass lining the White Grass Path.

The old temple began to blaze.

Shang Xingzhou walked out of the sea of fire, looking in the direction Chen Changsheng had vanished. He had a pensive expression.

Just now, he had given Chen Changsheng another palm strike.

The circumstances were completely different from the last two times.

He had not been able to gain too much of an advantage.

This fact made his mood rather strange: nervous with a slight tinge of concern.

The old temple in the sea of fire crackled.

Clear collisions seemed to still be ringing out in the air...

Like naughty children playing games with stone pearls.

.....

.....

Keys clattered against each other.

Eunuch Lin closed the door and turned to face the emperor. A helpless and nervous expression was on his face.

Yuren leaned on his walking stick as he pulled apart the ivy and came to the Hundred Herb Garden.

This was his first time leaving the Imperial Palace in the last three years.

Someone was already in the Hundred Herb Garden.

There, in a fluttering white gown, stood Xu Yourong.

With Wang Zhice standing guard in the Orthodox Academy, no one could enter.

Those most concerned about Chen Changsheng naturally had to be at the place closest to the Orthodox Academy so that they could go to his aid as soon as possible.

The Hundred Herb Garden and the Orthodox Academy were separated by only one wall.

Looking at Xu Yourong, Eunuch Lin recalled her long conversation with the emperor on that night. He then thought about what had happened in the last few days, and resentment began to show in his eyes.

Yuren faintly smiled at her and indicated that she should sit.

Few green buds could be seen in this chilly forest.

The stone table and stool were rather cool to touch.

Xu Yourong said, "The Empress is buried here."

Yuren calmly gazed at that part of the lawn, giving no response.

Xu Yourong suddenly said, "[When you put 'Yu' and 'Ren' together \(余人\), you get the word 'Xu' \(徐\).](#)"

Yuren had not been named by Emperor Xian, nor by the Divine Empress. He had been named by Shang Xingzhou.

She had only thought of this recently, because it was only recently that she began to think about the details of that engagement.

The marriage contract drawn up by the Grand Minister and Shang Xingzhou at the time had not stated specifically who she should marry. It only needed to be Shang Xingzhou's disciple.

From Yuren's name, one could tell that Shang Xingzhou had most likely intended to choose him.

Yuren did not deny this.

Back in Xining Village's old temple, he had refused this engagement, leading his master to choose Chen Changsheng.

Xu Yourong asked, "Why?"

To have a wife who was the reincarnation of the true Phoenix would be of enormous benefit to the throne.

And she had already been highly regarded by the Holy Maiden of the south at the time.

Yuren pointed at his eyes and then at the walking stick leaning on the table.

Xu Yourong replied, "Your Majesty's way of thinking is wrong."

Yuren gestured, "But I can't take the marriage, because what will happen if the other party is unsatisfied and wants to back out?"

Xu Yourong snorted and replied, "Just like everything else, anything that you don't want will become his."

This was what displeased her the most about Xining Village's old temple.

The more she cared about Chen Changsheng, the more she was displeased.

Every time she thought about his life back then, she would feel pity for him.

Yuren's face was fraught with apology.

"If you really are sorry about him, then you'd best show it as quickly as possible."

Xu Yourong indifferently said to him, "Otherwise, if he dies today, no matter how miserably you weep, I can only believe it to be feigned."

Yuren was somewhat puzzled.

At this moment, Shang Xingzhou and Chen Changsheng were in the Garden of Zhou.

One could only enter the Garden of Zhou through the black stone.

The black stone was in Wang Zhice's hands.

In order to ensure the fairness of this fight, Wang Zhice would not allow anyone else to enter the Garden of Zhou...

Not unless Shang Xingzhou and Chen Changsheng came out on their own.

Even if they wanted to help Chen Changsheng, how could they do it?

"The Heavenly Tome Monoliths are a path. Back then, Zhou Dufu broke the monoliths and made the Mausoleum of Books into thirteen mausoleums. Later on, he put those Heavenly Tome Monoliths in the Garden of Zhou. I want to know if these Heavenly Tome Monoliths can have the same effect as that one."

Xu Yourong took off a string of stone pearls from her wrist and placed them in front of Yuren.

The sight of these five stone pearls shocked Yuren.

In that conversation in the palace, he realized that Xu Yourong deeply loved his junior brother.

But it was only now that he knew that his junior brother also

deeply loved her.

The expression with which Yuren regarded her suddenly became gentler.

He took a box from his sleeve and placed it in front of Xu Yourong.

Xu Yourong opened the box and was greeted by sugared plums.

She was a little confused, but she still took one and put it in her mouth.

It was a little sour, and also a little sweet.

Was this compassion, or a promise?

This idiom refers to how in ancient China, during the Zhou Dynasty, there was a king who ruled harshly and had spies who would report on anyone who spoke ill of him. As a result, when people passed by each other on the road, they were too afraid to express their hatred through words, so they used their eyes.

This is actually slightly incorrect, as the 彳 of 徐 is usually regarded as two people walking side by side and is generally used to mean footsteps. Just 人 alone would be 亻.

Chapter 1104 – We've All Killed Before

Yuren did not take the string of stone pearls, even though he knew they were Heavenly Tome Monoliths.

Xu Yourong had undoubtedly placed her hopes on him because Chen Changsheng would often mention him.

But he had no way to enter the Garden of Zhou.

And he knew that Chen Changsheng would not want him to appear.

If Chen Changsheng really did encounter some unresolvable danger, he would naturally come out of the Garden of Zhou.

.....

.....

The White Grass Path was straight and long, and one would experience the transformations of the four seasons over a short period as one walked it.

It didn't take long for Chen Changsheng to experience spring, summer, autumn, and then winter, running headlong into a fierce snowstorm.

He continued to charge toward the other side of the snowstorm, his complexion even paler than the snow.

The temple in the depths of the snowstorm had already become a little black and blazing dot.

On the White Grass Path, there was a temple at ten li, one at one hundred, and one at one thousand.

Chen Changsheng and Shang Xingzhou met three times, each time at one of these three temples.

Whether or not he hid in the temple, he would eventually be found out.

Perhaps it was because the place this master and disciple had interacted the longest in was Xining Village's old temple.

These three short but dangerous encounters worsened Chen Changsheng's injuries.

A few of the monsters, endowed with more ambition than intelligence, could not help but appear to assist Chen Changsheng, only to be chopped to pieces by Shang Xingzhou's sword.

The sea of grass in those parts was painted red by monster blood, a gory sight.

No matter how dangerous the situation became, Chen Changsheng still had no intention of leaving the Garden of Zhou.

To leave on his own and imprison Shang Xingzhou in the Garden of Zhou was not an option, because that would not be a fight.

Moreover, the moment he opened that spatial path, Shang Xingzhou was highly likely to use that chance to catch him.

For this reason, he did not even try to use the laws of the Garden of Zhou to engage in spatial transfer.

More importantly, all the preparations he had made to defeat Shang Xingzhou completely lay in the Garden of Zhou.

In those days of quiet contemplation in the Li Palace, he had prepared a great deal.

But those methods had all been established on his ability to use his swords.

The moment he entered the Garden of Zhou, all his swords were taken away, so what could he do?

When would he stop his escape?

Just where did he want to go?

The snow falling over the sea of grass suddenly became rather dark.

This was because the light in the sky had changed.

A massive shadow had eclipsed the path and grasslands before him.

Like a wisp of smoke, Chen Changsheng flew through the snowstorm and into the depths of that shadow.

The Mausoleum of Zhou was there.

.....

.....

The bottom of his shoes left minor depressions on the stone, with tiny cracks webbing off from their edges.

The howling winds moved his sleeves, which were so straight that they seemed like flashing blades.

Chen Changsheng flew forward, quickly reaching the middle of the Mausoleum of Zhou, the familiar end of the mausoleum path.

A green tree called the Tong Palace had once grown here.

He and Xu Yourong had confronted the Golden-winged Great Peng summoned by Nanke here, as well as the terrifying monster tide.

The Sword Pool had awoken.

Ten thousand swords had formed a dragon.

This story of the past had not taken place too long ago, but it seemed to be from another life.

The Golden-winged Great Peng was in the ancestral lands of the Elf race, absorbing the essence of the world and waiting to truly mature.

Nanke was in Mount Li, listening every night to the music of the sword to clear her mind, with no one able to determine when she would truly wake up.

It was hard to say whether the monsters would be able to

continue living their beautiful life of the last few years after today.

Today, his opponent was only one man, but he was no less terrifying, perhaps even more.

The gravel along the edges of the sacrificial altar was scattered by the wind, several pieces stopping upon meeting his shoes.

Shang Xingzhou looked at the Mausoleum of Zhou, a change finally noticeable on his expression.

"I do not know what you prepared here."

He said to Chen Changsheng, "But just like I said at the start, there are no miracles."

Chen Changsheng replied, "I thought that a person like Zhou Dufu appearing under the starry sky was a sort of miracle in itself."

No matter what sort of assessment people had of Zhou Dufu after his death, many people would agree with this view.

The strongest under the starry sky, someone who was truly unequalled throughout the world, had to be a miracle.

Shang Xingzhou was quiet for a time, and then he smiled.

"Do you know why Wang Zhice is willing to help me even though he does not like me?"

He looked at Chen Changsheng and asked, "And do you know why that generation of elders could fight and scheme against each other, betray and backstab each other, plot and conspire, yet when fighting an external enemy or pushed to the final point, they could put on a united will against the outsider?"

Chen Changsheng said, "Because you share common experiences."

Shang Xingzhou calmly replied, "Yes, because we once had a common enemy."

Chen Changsheng said, "In the past, I thought it was the

demons."

Shang Xingzhou explained, "The existence of demons is naturally a reason to unite, but the more important reason was that person."

Chen Changsheng replied, "I don't quite understand."

Shang Xingzhou said, "Because that person let us clearly see ourselves and each other, allowing us to be frank with each other, to trust each other."

Chen Changsheng asked, "To clearly see just what you all wanted?"

Shang Xingzhou added, "At the same time, it let us clearly see how ugly our true thoughts were, because, in the end, that was still a most shameless affair."

Chen Changsheng understood, so he could only reply with silence.

Shang Xingzhou indifferently said, "You also killed a Zhou once, but compared to us, that was just a game."

Chen Changsheng had wanted to kill Zhou Tong.

Back then, those people had killed Zhou Dufu.

"If one said that he was a miracle, isn't our killing him the true miracle?"

Shang Xingzhou's eyes were so cold that it seemed like he was looking at a corpse.

Many years ago, they had even killed that person, much less Chen Changsheng.

The most famous and long-lived riddle of the last thousand years had finally been answered.

The theories of many people, the endless discussions of the tea houses and restaurants, had finally been confirmed.

This was unquestionably one of the deepest secrets of the world.

But Chen Changsheng was very calm.

He looked at Shang Xingzhou and asked, "How can you be so sure that he's actually dead?"

This place was Zhou Dufu's mausoleum.

He was standing in front of the gate to the mausoleum as he asked this question.

It felt like he was asking in place of the person within the mausoleum.

The cold winds rustled the gravel in the grasslands, making a sound that seemed like a voice aged by time.

Shang Xingzhou narrowed his eyes.

Chapter 1105 – A Strength Above Laws

The Mausoleum of Zhou spanned the space between the heavens and earth, and it also spanned the distance between Shang Xingzhou and Chen Changsheng.

They were separated by several hundred zhang, each a black dot in the eyes of the other.

But they could clearly make out each other's faces and the emotions in their eyes.

They didn't even need to look to know what the other was thinking.

No matter how much they had treated each other like strangers in the last few years, they were still a master and disciple that had lived together in that old temple for ten-some years.

After some time, Shang Xingzhou finally said, "He is already dead."

Chen Changsheng replied, "I don't know how your story from back then ended, but I know that his body is not inside this mausoleum."

Shang Xingzhou said, "Given that reckless brute's personality, if he were still alive, how could he stand to remain silent and not make trouble?"

Chen Changsheng was quiet for a while, and then he said, "Yes, he's probably dead, or else Emperor Taizong would not have been at ease."

"Was this your final move? Using him to scare me?"

Shang Xingzhou derided, "Truly childish."

Chen Changsheng admitted, "Yes, I just wanted to scare you."

Shang Xingzhou asked, "Was it interesting?"

Chen Changsheng replied, "Master's look just now truly was very interesting."

After this, he gave a delighted smile.

To him, this was a very rare emotion.

From this, one could determine that he was speaking the truth.

The truth was always the most hurtful.

From Xining Village to the capital, whether it was that nanny, maid, and madam in the Divine General of the East's estate, or the students of the Ivy Academies, including Tang Thirty-Six, they had all been hurt by the truth of Chen Changsheng's words. Even though Shang Xingzhou was his master, he still found it rather hard to endure.

Shang Xingzhou's gaze turned even colder.

He looked at Chen Changsheng, standing at the end of the mausoleum path, and took a step forward.

In the Garden of Zhou, he could not use the strength of laws that belonged to the Divine Domain, so he naturally could not disregard space.

He could not directly appear in front of Chen Changsheng.

In truth, the distance of his one step was precisely one step's worth.

Wind stirred beneath his feet.

His blue Daoist robes were blown straight.

Several hundred flickering streams of light traveled along the path and toward the main gate of the Mausoleum of Zhou.

The gale exploded, causing dust to rise from the surrounding wasteland, gradually obscuring the sky and dimming the world.

Hacking sounds, dense yet distinct, could be heard from within the gloomy world.

The surface of the mausoleum path and the massive stones lining it were covered in countless straight and deep scars.

These massive stones visibly began to blacken, then soften, and then be blown away by the wind as the finest gravel.

Those streams of light seemed ordinary, but they were in harmony with the laws of the world, the physical manifestations of Daoist techniques. They were imbued with unimaginable power.

Shang Xingzhou had struck with all his might, tens of thousands of Daos contained within. How could Chen Changsheng oppose them?

On the other side of the plains, the Monster Bull and the Mountain-toppling Fiend slowly stood up, turning into two small mountains.

Strangely, these two terrifying giants did not go to Chen Changsheng's aid. Instead, they retreated into the dust storm enveloping the world.

The barrier that was the Mausoleum of Zhou meant that Shang Xingzhou could not see this, nor could he see what was revealed after the Monster Bull and Mountain-toppling Fiend left.

The two giant beasts had been lying to the north of the Mausoleum of Zhou precisely in order to obstruct the ground here.

Here were four objects that seemed like sacrificial altars. They were already in a terrible state, but one could still tell that they had once served as plinths for monoliths.

Suddenly, the fierce gales ravaging the wasteland and the even farther grasslands suddenly vanished, as did the dust that they had stirred.

The warm sun once more appeared at the edge of the plains, quietly suspended in the sky.

The Mausoleum of Zhou had become absolutely still.

Those tens of thousands of Daos that represented the supreme principles of the world suddenly disappeared.

The string noiselessly snapped, and four stone pearls dropped down from Chen Changsheng's wrist and began to roll down the slope of the mausoleum path.

Those stone pearls looked very ordinary, devoid of any special traits. Nothing mystical happened when they dropped down. They just began to roll along the mausoleum path, lightly clacking against the massive stones. It seemed like they might drop into the gaps between the massive stones, where they would no longer be able to roll out or might even be smashed into powder by the fall.

In terms of probability or law, these were both very likely outcomes.

But none of these things happened.

The four stone pearls rolled over the mausoleum path and over the massive stones. They seemed random and without purpose, but they were rolling with remarkable precision toward the four sacrificial altars on the north side of the Mausoleum of Zhou. It was like these stone pearls had their own will, their own goal.

As time passed, in this seemingly both random and orderly way, the accident became the inevitable, in complete defiance of the laws of the world.

Perhaps it was because these four stone pearls had always been existences above laws?

.....

.....

It was completely unreasonable, yet it also felt like this was the only proper course of action.

The four stone pearls arrived at the base of the Mausoleum of Zhou and split up to travel to the four sacrificial altars.

The wind abruptly stirred once more. Accompanied by a sense of vastness and distance, four monoliths appeared in the world.

The earth quaked and the monsters in the plains howled with some sort of unknown meaning.

The surface of these black monoliths was smooth and carved with incomprehensible lines seemingly imbued with a void-like magic.

These were the Heavenly Tome Monoliths that Zhou Dufu had taken from the Mausoleum of Books.

The wind in the sky and the plains began to pour into the Heavenly Tome Monoliths, vanishing into some unknown place.

Innumerable bits of grass and stone followed, but they did not disappear.

It was like time was reversing as the dirt gradually wrapped around the Heavenly Tome Monoliths, making them into stone pillars, their surfaces seemingly eroded by the wind and rain.

Shang Xingzhou looked at Chen Changsheng and said, "As expected, these Heavenly Tome Monoliths ended up in your hands."

Chen Changsheng replied, "Yes."

Other than the two reasons he had spoken of before, he had chosen to challenge Shang Xingzhou in the Garden of Zhou because of the Heavenly Tome Monoliths.

At his current level, he simply could not comprehend the ultimate mystery of the Heavenly Tome Monoliths, so he naturally could not use them.

When facing the Demon Lord in the snowy mountains and the Angel of Sacred Light in White Emperor City, he had only been able to use the Heavenly Tome Monoliths as indestructible weapons of infinite weight.

Only in the Garden of Zhou could he use at least a part of the Heavenly Tome Monoliths' true power.

This was because of the sacrificial altars and array that Zhou Dufu had set up here.

The Heavenly Tome Monoliths were not stable in their stone pillar state. Their surfaces were constantly cracking and repairing.

Timeworn and ancient Qis were emerging from these cracks, transforming into terrifying streams of light.

These streams of light drifted down from the sky, down to where Shang Xingzhou was standing.

"You think that this can defeat me?"

Shang Xingzhou slapped his palm.

He was standing on the ground, but his hand seemed to touch the dome of the heavens.

There was a light clap.

The streaming lights flowed across the curtain of the heavens.

Shang Xingzhou's complexion was rather pale, but he remained indifferent.

"It is now time for you to choose."

Amidst the flowing lights, several fine cracks appeared on the sky.

The frightened yowls of the monster packs could be heard from deep within the plains, perhaps because they had recalled the near-apocalypse from several years ago.

If Chen Changsheng continued to use the Heavenly Tome Monoliths to attack Shang Xingzhou, he was highly likely to win.

But the Garden of Zhou might also be destroyed before this happened.

This was the choice Chen Changsheng had to make.

At this moment, he truly missed those swords.

Chapter 1106 – The Meaning of Choices

Using the array left behind by Zhou Dufu to harness the true strength of the Heavenly Tome Monoliths against Shang Xingzhou had been Chen Changsheng's plan from the start.

During those nights in the Li Palace's stone chamber, he had become extremely familiar with the ins and outs of this plan.

But in the original plan, he would have already set up the South Stream Temple sword array around the Mausoleum of Zhou by now.

Several thousand renowned swords would have returned to the plains, balancing out the four Heavenly Tome Monoliths, ensuring that the Garden of Zhou would not collapse.

If all these plans had been realized, he had a seventy percent chance of defeating his master.

Alas, all this swords had been snatched away by Shang Xingzhou, naturally reducing his chances of victory.

Crucially, without the timeworn sword intents of the several thousand swords to suppress them, the clear streams of light emanating from the Heavenly Tome Monoliths would probably destroy the Garden of Zhou before they defeated Shang Xingzhou.

Shang Xingzhou had needed only a glance to see through Chen Changsheng's intentions and understand the situation.

Thus, he would not retreat, and he certainly would not concede.

He would persist until the end, would even be willing to trigger the restrictions of the Garden of Zhou.

Chen Changsheng could continue using the Heavenly Tome Monoliths to attack until he won, but the Garden of Zhou might be destroyed before that happened.

...Unless Chen Changsheng wanted to take these four Heavenly

Tome Monoliths and leave the Garden of Zhou as quickly as possible.

But once he returned to the real world, he would no longer have the seal of the Garden of Zhou, could not use the strength of the Heavenly Tome Monoliths, and he had no swords... How could Chen Changsheng possibly defeat him then?

It was a multiple-choice question.

Shang Xingzhou calmly stared at Chen Changsheng.

The lights spilling down from the sky were halted by his palm while clouds and winds engaged in a cycle of creation and destruction.

At the end, everything in the world was often a multiple-choice question.

It truly made one feel fed up.

"Why is it always me that has to make the choice?"

Chen Changsheng was truly angry, or perhaps irritated. His voice was carried far into the distance by the winds.

Shang Xingzhou had an indifferent expression. It seemed like he had no intention of answering.

From Xining Village to the capital, from ten years old to now, he had answered far too many multiple-choice questions. It was truly very annoying.

He really wanted to ask his master, 'Aren't you annoyed after doing this all the time?'

In the end, however, he did not ask, because he knew that asking was meaningless.

Just like in the past, he was used to doing things, not talking.

No matter what choice he had to make.

Or perhaps, he wouldn't make a choice.

Yes, today, he truly didn't want to make another choice.

His eyes were exceptionally bright, just like that moon hanging over Xunyang City.

His spiritual sense flew through the air into Shang Xingzhou's sleeve, attempting to seize back the Vault Sheath.

Even if he couldn't, he at least had to re-establish connection with the swords inside the sheath.

He was confident that once those swords perceived his spiritual sense, they would definitely follow his will, flying out of the sheath to appear in this world.

And yet, he failed.

His face went white, like the snow covering the wasteland.

A stream of blood trickled from his lips, a lonely winter plum in the snow.

Shang Xingzhou's right hand continued to hold up the sky.

As the wind ruffled his sleeves, one could faintly see that his left hand was holding the sheath.

Chen Changsheng's gaze was fixed there.

"A person's most authentic courage, intelligence, and temperament are most clearly on display when they make a choice."

Shang Xingzhou looked at him and said, "You have greatly disappointed me today, because you don't even have the courage to make a choice."

Chen Changsheng asked, "Since any choice is losing, why do I have to choose?"

Shang Xingzhou answered, "Because that is just your fate."

Many years ago, in Xining Village's old temple, he had said something to Chen Changsheng.

'You are sick. No one can cure it. That is just your fate.'

Today, again, he said something similar.

'No matter what you choose, you will lose. That is just your fate.'

Chen Changsheng gazed deep into the plains. He remained quiet for a very long time.

Shang Xingzhou calmly and quietly watched him.

After some time, Chen Changsheng looked back at Shang Xingzhou and said, "But my illness has been cured."

Yes, his illness had been cured.

He was still alive.

Thus, there was no such thing as fate.

Which meant that choices had meaning.

...Whether he won or lost.

.....

.....

It was very quiet, both inside and outside the Orthodox Academy.

Hundred Flowers Lane was packed with people, but there was no sound, not even a random noise.

Their faces were fraught with tension, anxiety, and concern.

By now, everyone knew that Shang Xingzhou and Chen Changsheng were fighting in the Garden of Zhou.

The crowd could not see sword glows or hear sword cries, and no one knew exactly what was happening inside.

However, Wang Po and the Prince of Xiang were experts of the Divine Domain, so space could not sever them from all information.

Why was it that they could not detect a single sword intent from within the Orthodox Academy?

The Prince of Xiang's face seemed ready to both cry and smile, making it impossible to tell what he was really feeling. However, the two hands holding up his plump belly began to subconsciously stroke his fat.

Wang Po thought of a certain possibility and his complexion turned rather dark.

Given his cultivation level, Tang Thirty-Six naturally could not tell what was happening in the Garden of Zhou, but he had been keeping a close watch on the changes in Wang Po's expression.

From start to finish, his gaze had been peering through a crack in the window at Wang Po's face.

This was his sole source of information at the moment.

The change in Wang Po's complexion allowed him to understand that the situation wasn't good, causing his own complexion to pale.

The shattered remains of a blue Ruyao porcelain cup could be found on the floor, along with water and tea leaves.

His hand gripped a tea pot, the tea in the pot already cold.

He put the tea pot to his mouth and drank down half a pot of cold tea, but he still could not slow his heartbeat, nor could he extinguish that fire in his heart.

He ran downstairs, pushing past Su Moyu, and ran all the way to the gate of the Orthodox Academy.

Linghai Zhiwang and the others were all surprised, wondering just what he intended to do.

Both the Imperial Court and the Li Palace had agreed to lock the gates of the Orthodox Academy. Only Wang Zhice, Shang Xingzhou, and Chen Changsheng could remain inside.

The Orthodoxy cavalry and black-armored cavalry were standing guard in the surroundings, as were countless cultivators, and even experts like Wang Po and the Prince of Xiang.

No one could even think about entering the Orthodox Academy at this time.

Tang Thirty-Six simply did not care about those unkind and warning gazes, and he certainly would not give those princes time to speak.

"Everyone, shut your mouths!

"This here is the Orthodox Academy, and I'm the academy superintendent! When Chen Changsheng isn't here, I'm the one with the most power!

"No one can enter because I won't agree to it! If I want to enter, whose agreement do I need?"

.....

.....

Hundred Flowers Lane was restless, sword intents rising in the air, and even a few crossbow bolts were arcing through the air.

Standing by the lake, Wang Zhice turned to look and saw Tang Thirty-Six.

Tang Thirty-Six guessed that he was Wang Zhice, but he did not offer his greeting. He immediately asked, "How do you get into the Garden of Zhou?"

It had been countless years since Wang Zhice encountered someone who knew his identity but simply didn't care. He was inevitably rather surprised, but then he became amused.

He opened his hand to reveal the black stone inside and explained, "This serves as the entrance."

Tang Thirty-Six demanded, "Give it to me."

His demand was concise and simple.

So much so that Wang Zhice blankly gazed at him for some time before reacting.

"Why?"

"The Garden of Zhou is Chen Changsheng's, so this thing is naturally also his."

"He was the one that gave it to me, and it was originally mine."

It was now Tang Thirty-Six's turn to blankly stare for a while before reacting.

"That it was originally yours means that it's no longer yours. And besides, how old are you now? He gives it to you and now you want it!"

Wang Zhice had never met such an unreasonable person before. He quickly guessed this fellow's background.

He said, "Not even your grandfather dares to speak to me like this."

"Duh. Who besides Emperor Taizong would dare treat you with disrespect?"

Tang Thirty-Six suddenly changed the topic, saying, "But I have to congratulate you today."

Wang Zhice asked, "Over what?"

"Congratulations for finally meeting someone other than Emperor Taizong who dares to curse at you."

Tang Thirty-Six sincerely said, "If you're not willing to give that thing to me, I'll curse your mother."

Wang Zhice perked his brows and said, "I am the judge for this match."

Tang Thirty-Six said, "You were invited by Shang Xingzhou. I don't trust you."

Wang Zhice replied, "The Pope trusts me."

Tang Thirty-Six asked, "What does that have to do with me?"

Wang Zhice calmly asked, "If I don't give it you, what will you

do?"

Tang Thirty-Six's reply was simple and concise.

The Wenshui Sword left its sheath, carpeting the surface of the lake with thousands of golden leaves.

Wang Zhice's expression shifted.

It was not because of Tang Thirty-Six's sword.

It was because Tang Thirty-Six had reversed his sword.

To cut his own throat.

Chapter 1107 – A Broken Tree

It was probably a bit of an exaggeration to say that Wang Zhice needed only one finger to crush Tang Thirty-Six to death like he was an ant.

But if he used two fingers, he was completely capable of easily killing Tang Thirty-Six.

The gap in strength between the two was just this massive.

Tang Thirty-Six could not possibly threaten Wang Zhice, and even seeking death in front of Wang Zhice was no easy matter.

The Wenshui Sword was caught in two of Wang Zhice's fingers, so firmly held that it could not proceed another inch.

For a tragic suicide to suddenly become this was inevitably rather awkward.

Tang Thirty-Six seemed unperturbed, even raising his brow.

By raising his brow, he was issuing a challenge.

His meaning was crystal-clear.

If he sincerely wanted to die, he had many methods. Cutting his throat with a sword was undoubtedly the method with the lowest chance of success.

He was waiting for Wang Zhice to stop him, as only this way could he continue negotiating conditions.

Wang Zhice smirked at him, "Giving you this stone would still be useless."

Tang Thirty-Six saw his expression and understood.

Given his current level of cultivation, even if he got the black stone, he wouldn't be able to enter the Garden of Zhou, so he wouldn't be able to help Chen Changsheng.

Tang Thirty-Six asked with heartfelt sincerity, "Then can I

trouble Sir to help?"

Wang Zhice did not reply.

Tang Thirty-Six added, "I know that he's definitely not faring well right now."

Wang Zhice's gaze dropped to the black stone as he said, "Correct. At the moment, he is facing an extremely difficult choice."

Tang Thirty-Six said nothing for a few moments, then commented, "He's a good person."

He said these words with unprecedented dignity.

Wang Zhice agreed, "Yes."

Tang Thirty-Six looked into his eyes and said, "A good person shouldn't have to live so arduously."

Wang Zhice replied, "This has nothing to do with good or bad."

Tang Thirty-Six was somewhat disappointed and extremely furious.

He mocked, "That's right, it has nothing to with good or bad, only strong or weak. In the end, it's just the strong bullying the weak."

Wang Zhice shook his head. "Every person has to take responsibility for their own choices."

Tang Thirty-Six sneered, "Then why does he have to choose? Why isn't it any of you that's choosing?"

Wang Zhice replied, "Shang Xingzhou agreed to fight with him because he was forced to make that choice."

Tang Thirty-Six replied, "That choice is too complicated. All of you should be a little simpler."

Wang Zhice asked, "For example?"

Tang Thirty-Six stated, "All of you can choose to die, or choose to die."

Wang Zhice faintly smiled. "Is there another choice?"

Tang Thirty-Six said, "You can choose to burning to death, drowning to death, being shot to death by arrows, or death by a thousand cuts."

This was not a chat, but a command, or perhaps a curse. His flat tone was brimming with scorn and hatred.

But all this came from helplessness.

As he gazed at the ice on the lake and the duckweed left over from last year, Tang Thirty-Six felt rather tired.

Would he just lose like this?

He truly felt unwilling.

He felt unwilling in Chen Changsheng's place.

He suddenly shouted at the sky.

"You blind dog!"

.....

.....

.....

.....

The turmoil in Hundred Flowers Lane made it difficult to hear Tang Thirty-Six's words.

But the Hundred Herb Garden, only separated by a wall from the Orthodox Academy, could hear them loud and clear.

Yuren seemed to have noticed, and used his eyes to voice his question.

"Tang Tang wants to disturb Lord Wang's mind."

Xu Yourong said, "If there's the smallest possibility, he will use the strategies in Wenshui's old estate to force Lord Wang into a compromise."

She referred here to that conversation between grandfather and grandson over the mahjong table.

He was willing to destroy the Tang clan, so he naturally didn't care for all the living beings of the world.

It was obvious that this was still not enough to move Wang Zhice, to persuade him.

He had not even been able to express what he had truly wanted to say, what he had truly wanted to threaten.

Tang Thirty-Six's attempt had failed.

A faint concern could be seen in Xu Yourong's eyes.

Her left hand tightly gripped the five stone pearls.

These five pearls had originally been five of the Heavenly Tome Monoliths in the Garden of Zhou, a portion of Zhou Dufu's great array.

A moment ago, a ripple had come from these five stone pearls, allowing her to get a rough understanding of the situation in the Garden of Zhou.

She knew that Chen Changsheng was facing a choice.

She also knew how Chen Changsheng would choose.

She knew before he had even made the choice.

To Chen Changsheng, this choice was simply not as difficult as Wang Zhice said it would be.

Because she understood Chen Changsheng.

Yuren also understood Chen Changsheng.

So he also knew how Chen Changsheng would choose.

And that meant that Chen Changsheng had lost.

.....

.....

Every street and residence in the capital heard that massive explosion.

Furious waves of Qi exploded over the lake, jolting up snow, yellowed grass, and mud, crackling against the walls and trees.

The lake waters roiled and shook, rolling up snow as they flew into the air and rumbled back down.

The entire Orthodox Academy was enveloped in a sudden downpour.

Two figures appeared in the rain:

Chen Changsheng and Shang Xingzhou.

The sky brightened for an instant, like a bolt of lightning had streaked across it.

In that flash of light in the dark rain, one could vaguely see Shang Xingzhou's hand fall on Chen Changsheng's stomach.

Chen Changsheng flew like a stone, crashing through ten-some thick trees to fall deep in the forest.

The great trees snapped, creaking to the ground and sending shocks through the earth.

Tang Thirty-Six took up the Wenshui Sword and prepared to charge forward, his left hand clenching a magical artifact in his sleeve.

There was a light pop.

Wang Zhice's finger struck his brow.

Tang Thirty-Six found it impossible to move.

Two golden flames suddenly appeared in the Hundred Herb Garden.

Xu Yourong vanished from her spot.

Without turning his head, Wang Zhice pointed his finger behind him.

Behind him was the academy wall.

An opening several zhang wide appeared in the wall.

The bricks and remnants of the wooden door lay quietly on the ground.

A light breeze lingered there, gentle and warm, yet unable to pass through.

A white feather drifted down from the void.

Xu Yourong appeared.

Wang Zhice suddenly sensed something and turned around.

His eyes were not focused on Xu Yourong, but behind her.

The Hundred Herb Garden was just as serene as it had been for the last several hundred years.

A walking stick quietly rested on the edge of the stone table.

.....

.....

The great tree lay broken, flakes of bark spreading everywhere like petals.

Chen Changsheng sat against the broken tree, coughing.

Shang Xingzhou asked, "Do you still insist that choices have meaning?"

Chen Changsheng replied, "Yes, because how we choose determines who we are."

Shang Xingzhou was speechless.

Chen Changsheng was right.

If it had been the Xu Yourong or Tang Thirty-Six in the Garden of Zhou, he would not have given them a chance to choose.

He wanted Chen Changsheng to choose precisely because he wanted to know how Chen Changsheng would choose.

It was precisely for this reason that Chen Changsheng was Chen Changsheng.

Thus, choices had meaning.

But the current battle was already meaningless.

Chen Changsheng could still stand, but his loss was already decided.

By choosing to leave the Garden of Zhou, he had abandoned any hope of winning.

Shang Xingzhou had a rather wooden expression as he said, "Just concede."

Chen Changsheng's tone was very natural as he said, "No."

Shang Xingzhou was quiet for a while, and then his right gripped the hilt of a sword.

Not the Stainless Sword, but his own sword.

As Chen Changsheng prepared to rise, his right hand fell on the broken tree.

Suddenly, his hand hit something solid and hard.

Chapter 1108 – [6666](#)

The Orthodox Academy had a very long history; it had been founded even earlier than the Great Zhou. Many great trees grew within it, some of them even surpassing one thousand years in age.

In that bloody incident twenty-some years ago, quite a few of the ancient trees had been destroyed, but most of them had survived. The trees of the forest near the Imperial Palace had especially flourished, their rich canopies creating a quiet and serene atmosphere. Chen Changsheng had noticed this forest when he entered the Orthodox Academy for the first time, and he had spent many early mornings there, practiced his sword many times.

He knew that these trees were very tough, their bark also very tough, but he still found it rather strange.

This object he had hit was very hard, but its edge was not sharp. Instead, it was smooth, like it had been polished.

He turned his head and realized that there was a hole about a foot deep where the tree had snapped.

The tree's leaves were already blocking out the sun, and dust and snow had accumulated in the hole, making it very difficult to see what was inside.

This had probably been a hollow in the tree before.

The object his right hand had touched was inside this hole.

To put it another way, that object had been inside this tree hollow the entire time.

Chen Changsheng could not be sure what this object was.

Shang Xingzhou's sword had come.

The Dao sword of the Monastery of Eternal Spring was imbued with the purest and coldest aura. It cut through the chilling winds and slashed at his stomach.

.....

.....

When Shang Xingzhou was walking toward Chen Changsheng, Xu Yourong was walking into the Orthodox Academy.

Wang Zhice once more jabbed his finger through the air.

A gentle breeze blew about the lake shore. There was no shrill howl. Nothing seemed to have happened.

But in reality, an invisible barrier had formed between the Orthodox Academy and the Hundred Herb Garden.

At this moment, Xu Yourong made a very special move.

She raised her left hand, her finger lightly jabbing at the void.

Pop.

It was a soft sound.

It was like the most fragile of bubbles being punctured by the softest of hairs.

The invisible barrier was no more.

Xu Yourong finally stepped into the Orthodox Academy.

Her face was pale, with an extremely thin trickle of blood at the corner of her lips.

Wang Zhice had not used some finger technique, but a technique he had created while studying in his old home in Donglin Alley: the Star Seizing Hand.

He had not expected Xu Yourong to be able to deal with this move, leaving him rather astonished.

To his even greater astonishment, Xu Yourong ceased to pay him any attention upon entering the Orthodox Academy, instead aiming her gaze at that master and disciple in the forest.

The breeze ruffled her white robes as the Tong Bow appeared in

her hands, the Wu Arrow notched on its string. She was prepared to strike at any time.

The situation instantly turned tense.

She was prepared to use the Wu Arrows to stop Shang Xingzhou, so did she think that Wang Zhice would not stop her? Or did she trust that someone would stop Wang Zhice?

Who was that other person?

It naturally couldn't be Tang Thirty-Six.

He was under Wang Zhice's control, had become a statue by the lake.

As he couldn't turn his neck, he couldn't see what was going on in that forest, only look at the lake and the sky.

It was no longer snowing, but the clouds had not dispersed. They still screened out the sun, leaving the capital particularly gloomy.

At the start, he had been filled with loathing, shouting that the Old Heavens were blind.

Now, he was only praying for Chen Changsheng, hoping that the heavens would open their eyes.

Suddenly, a clear cry rose from the forest.

A light flitted past his eyes.

A hole appeared in the sky.

Sunlight spilled through like a gorgeous waterfall.

Tang Thirty-Six wondered in shock, did somebody really open their eyes?

.....

.....

The black mountain range that was the body of a dragon slowly undulated behind the clouds, stirring powerful winds.

The little Black Dragon had not gone far after leaving the Orthodox Academy. She had hidden close by, prepared at any time to break through the clouds.

If Chen Changsheng was truly in danger, she had no mind for the rules of this fight, and as for that judge... she had wanted to put everything on the line against him for ages.

The sea of clouds began to roil as a hole was torn through it.

Flabbergasted, she turned her gaze to the ground.

She saw the streets of the capital, saw the Mausoleum of Books, saw the Imperial Palace.

Finally, she saw the Orthodox Academy.

A dark forest grew where the Orthodox Academy and the Imperial Palace connected.

The forest had suddenly become bright.

It wasn't because of the sunlight falling through that hole in the clouds. It was because of a sword glow.

Ten-some shattered trees formed a straight line leading into the depths of the forest.

The stump of one tree had already transformed into countless shards of wood and bark floating in the sky.

These pieces of bark and shards of wood floated together with the snow from early this morning and the lake water that had been sent flying into the air.

In this bizarre picture stood two figures.

Shang Xingzhou stood in front of Chen Changsheng, looking down upon him, his Dao sword having already slashed down.

Chen Changsheng was not dead, because a sword had appeared in his hand.

It was precisely this sword that had blocked Shang Xingzhou's

sword.

Chen Changsheng was still using the Stupid Sword.

This sword style had been regarded by Su Li as the number one defensive style in the world, and had saved Chen Changsheng's life countless times.

In the Garden of Zhou, Chen Changsheng had also relied on this sword style to escape death time after time.

This time, however, Chen Changsheng had not been sent flying.

His left foot had sunk deeply into the ground, but it was as steady as if it had taken root.

This was a sword style, so only a sword could truly display its wonder and might!

The problem was, just where had this sword come from?

There was no time to ponder this question.

A clear whistle echoed through the forest.

Shang Xingzhou's sleeve lightly drifted upward, and then his Dao sword descended once more.

Wind and snow followed.

Shang Xingzhou's figure vanished.

Countless sword glows appeared.

The forest was covered in the slashes of swords.

Sudden silence.

Chen Changsheng raised up his sword to confront his foe.

Clang! Clang!

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

Several dozen clangs rang out around him.

In that extremely brief moment of time, Shang Xingzhou had

attacked several dozen times!

These swords had descended so quickly that the sound of one individual clash did not have time to differentiate itself from another!

But Chen Changsheng had blocked all these swords!

His sword was raised to line up with his brows.

His left knee was bent.

He stood at his original position.

He did not move.

No matter how profound and indescribable you are, how unfathomable your sword intent is, if I bare my sword horizontally before me and weigh down my heart, I can remain safe behind my walls and disregard everything going on outside.

This was a true Sword Domain!

But how long could he last under Shang Xingzhou's flurry of attacks?

Even if he possessed a perfect Sword Domain and Star Domain, possessed unimaginable amounts of true essence, he could not endure forever.

And Shang Xingzhou was someone who cultivated tens of thousands of Daos. Just who knew what other terrifying moves were hidden up his drooping sleeves?

Chen Changsheng was not prepared to give his master this sort of chance.

In a moment that he could not anticipate but knew would come eventually, he struck.

A sword glow illuminated the gloomy forest.

This sword was as fast as a bolt of lightning.

This sword's sword intent was clear and shallow, but not at all

simple. It was like a fish in a stream, right before the eyes but incredibly difficult to reach out to and touch.

The trajectory of this sword was incredibly profound, so unfathomable that even the gods would find it hard to trace!

This sword pierced through three pieces of bark, cut apart several shards of wood, circled around his left hand, and then seemed to inadvertently stab into the storm.

A groan came from somewhere as the storm fell into disorder.

Shang Xingzhou appeared several zhang away in the snow with a tear in his sleeve.

Chen Changsheng straightened his body, sword in hand, and quietly watched him.

The repetition of the number 6 is Chinese internet slang. When someone types a bunch of 6's in chat, they are basically praising you and calling you awesome.

Chapter 1109 – The Nobleman Conceals Weapons on His Body and Waits for the Proper Time to Move

A chilly wind rustled the remaining leaves on the trees. All was quiet in the forest.

The bark, wood shards, and snowflakes gradually drifted back down.

Only those remnants of sword intent continued to linger in the wind.

Like the smoke left behind after a firecracker had finished popping, they served as evidence of what had happened a few moments ago.

Just when Chen Changsheng seemed about to die, the battle underwent an abrupt and massive change, even beginning to show signs of reversing.

All of it originated from the sword in his hand.

He calmly gazed at Shang Xingzhou, saying nothing. This did not symbolize unease, but confidence.

As long as he had a sword in hand, what did he have to fear?

As Su Li's successor, Chen Changsheng possessed a talent in the sword that could stun the world.

Several years ago, with all the swords he had in his possession, he had defeated powerful foe after powerful foe, even forcing his way alone into the alley of the Northern Military Department, astounding countless spectators.

Several years later, he acquired the Unity Sword Art at Holy Maiden Peak, comprehended the true meaning of the path of the sword at Mount Li, and was able to lay down the South Stream

Temple sword array all on his own in White Emperor City. First defeating the Demon Lord and then rescuing the White Emperor, he finally reached great success in his cultivation of the sword, becoming a publicly acknowledged grandmaster.

...Even though he was still very young and it was very difficult to associate him with the title of grandmaster.

His strongest move was the storm of swords.

Shang Xingzhou had prepared for this long ago, using a backdoor that he had hidden many years ago to snatch away all of Chen Changsheng's swords, leaving him unable to counterattack within the Garden of Zhou.

Only now did Chen Changsheng finally have a sword.

Not even a grandmaster of the sword could take up any random sword and begin killing in all directions.

This sword was clearly not normal. At the very least, he seemed of one mind with it.

Shang Xingzhou's gaze moved down to that sword.

This sword had suffered many years of wind and rain, and then it had been hidden away in that tree for quite a few years. It had been devoid of any aura, appearing like an ordinary stick of metal.

If Chen Changsheng had not broken open that tree through his collision, probably no one would have noticed its existence.

Today, Chen Changsheng had pulled it out from that hollow in the tree.

The dust and filth on the sword had completely vanished, leaving a bright surface, a sharp edge, and an awe-inspiring sword intent.

It was a like a pearl that had been caked in dust for many years, or a Phoenix that had not called for many years, finally able to unleash its dazzling light, able to let out a stunning cry.

Shang Xingzhou slightly raised his brows.

This sword came from a long-gone era, so it had most likely come out of the Sword Pool.

Everyone knew that Chen Changsheng had taken those famous swords from the previous generations out of the Garden of Zhou and put them all in the Vault Sheath.

That sheath was in his sleeve at this moment.

So where had this sword come from?

Could it be that Chen Changsheng had already determined that he could control the Vault Sheath and so made preparations to counter this move, hiding a sword in that tree to catch him by surprise?

No, seeing Chen Changsheng's reaction, he did not know that a sword was in that tree.

And from the moss that had been growing on the edge of the sword, it had probably been stored in that tree for several years.

Let alone Chen Changsheng, not even Black Robe joining hands with Wang Zhice with Xu Yourong at the side calculating a hundred times with her Fated Star Plate could have possibly guessed several years in advance at today's circumstances.

Moreover, if Chen Changsheng had already guessed at his strategy, he would have had even better ways to respond. There would have been no need for him to be forced into this state.

Could this not be a sword from the Garden of Zhou's Sword Pool but some sword hidden in that tree by a teacher or student of the Orthodox Academy?

When Shang Xingzhou thought about how the person who had hidden that sword might have been one of his followers, his mood became rather complex.

That sword had remained undiscovered in that tree for so many years but had ended up in Chen Changsheng's hands today... at the

moment when he most needed it.

Was this coincidence? Or was it luck? Or was this a hint from fate?

.....

.....

It was very quiet by the lake of the Orthodox Academy and the wall of the Hundred Herb Garden.

Xu Yourong put down the Tong Bow.

Yuren was standing by the stone table, leaning on his stick.

Wang Zhice drew back his finger.

They silently watched the scene deep in the forest, each with a different expression.

Everything had happened quickly, but they had roughly understood the truth of the matter.

In the Garden of Zhou, for some reason, Chen Changsheng had lost all his swords, so he could only passively be beaten, putting him in extreme danger.

At the most perilous moment, Chen Changsheng had pulled a sword out of the broken tree and altered the course of the entire battle.

But... why was there a sword in that tree?

Tang Thirty-Six could move now, but he didn't.

Because Chen Changsheng had already escaped his dangerous situation, but also because he was in a rather strange mood.

He felt like this matter had something to do with him, though he couldn't think of the reason.

.....

.....

Hundred Flowers Lane had also heard the clanging of swords.

With the quarrel instigated by Tang Thirty-Six forcing his way into the Orthodox Academy settled, the stalemate and possible conflict died away.

The crowd turned in shock and anxiety toward the Orthodox Academy.

Wang Po opened his eyes and looked to the Orthodox Academy, somewhat surprised and deeply admiring.

The Prince of Xiang, on the other hand, closed his eyes, seeming to age several years in a few seconds.

.....

.....

Shang Xingzhou looked at Chen Changsheng and asked, "Did you know there was a sword there?"

Chen Changsheng replied, "I didn't."

When he looked at the sword in his hand, he felt very familiar with it, even intimate.

Like they had once been schoolmates, comrades-in-arms, or at least they had shared the same ideals.

Thus, he knew the origin of this sword.

This sword had come from the Sword Pool, had once fought side by side with him.

When the ten thousand swords had formed a dragon, it had been one of the scales.

Though it had been many years since he had last seen it.

So you were here this whole time.

But why were you here?

Laughter suddenly came from the lake shore.

"HAHAHAHA!"

It was exceptionally happy laughter, a delight that penetrated to the bone. More importantly, it sounded like some incredibly annoying person was incredibly pleased with themselves.

"It was me! In the end, it was still me!"

Tang Thirty-Six shouted, a look of extreme arrogance on his face.

Wang Zhice was stupefied, thinking, just what sort of madness has taken this young man?

Tang Thirty-Six was shouting to the entire world.

"I hid that sword in there!"

Chen Changsheng stared blankly at him, and then he finally remembered that matter, and then he couldn't help but laugh as well.

This chapter title is a quote from 'The Book of Changes' and is generally attributed to Confucius. The intention is that the nobleman/gentleman, the 君子, will be reserved and not tend to flaunt their skills, showing their expertise only when it is needed.

Chapter 1110 – When the Great Sun Comes, Who Can Be at Ease?

The incident that Chen Changsheng remembered had taken place several years ago.

It had been said that a Sword Pool existed within the Garden of Zhou, and countless renowned swords from previous generations lay within it.

The rumor proved to be true, as Chen Changsheng discovered the Sword Pool in the Garden of Zhou and brought that almost uncountable number of swords back to this world.

Famous swords like the temple sword, which belonged to an existing lineage, were returned to those sects using the name of the Li Palace, but he was still left with a large number of swords.

Thus, on an ordinary night, a meeting was held in the Orthodox Academy to share the riches.

Xuanyuan Po received the Mountain Sea Sword, Zhexiu wanted the Demon Commander's Banner Sword, and Luoluo had received an even better gift. Later on, Su Moyu had requested a fencing sword called Beauty Yu, and even Mo Yu had requested the Yue Maiden Sword from Chen Changsheng.

Tang Thirty-Six had not changed swords, because his Wenshui Sword was one of the famous swords of the generation while simultaneously serving as the symbol of the Tang clan.

But unbeknownst to everyone, he had also actually requested a sword from Chen Changsheng. Yet he had not carried this sword at his side, instead choosing to thrust it into the hollow of an ancient scholar tree in a remote part of the forest, carefully disguising it with fallen leaves and mud.

Chen Changsheng had no idea why he wanted to do this.

Tang Thirty-Six was raising swords.

Several decades later, or perhaps even several centuries, on an ordinary and unremarkable morning, an impoverished and short student who came from an impoverished background and was bullied by his classmates would be rounding the corner of a corridor and suddenly hear a folk song from his home in the southeast. Unable to stop his tears, he would charge into a grove and begin striking at trees, exchanging physical pain for mental consolation. Suddenly, he would discover a famous sword used by a swordsman of a previous generation falling out of an ancient tree, and the sword would even have a strand of sword intent on it. Instantly, his Ethereal Palace would be stimulated and all his Qi openings would begin to blaze...

This was how Tang Thirty-Six had described it back then.

He believed that what he had done would become a legend of the Orthodox Academy several decades, even centuries, from now.

He had not expected that this sword would see the light of day again after only a few years, and it would end up back in Chen Changsheng's hand.

He had even forgotten that this sword existed.

But it now seemed that it was precisely this sword that had saved Chen Changsheng's life in the most dangerous moment.

It was also about to decide the conflict between the new and conservative factions of the Orthodoxy, the conflict between the Orthodoxy and the Imperial Court. It was about to decide the course of the continent for the next several years.

In other words, all of history was about to be altered.

And it was all because he had hidden his sword there back then.

It wasn't important that he didn't remember, because the sword had still been hidden by him there.

Was this what it meant when one said that every sip and every bite was preordained?

What did the saying, '[a grass snake's murky trail can stealthily travel for a thousand li](#)' mean?

Each move on the board had a profound meaning. When had there ever been such a thing as a useless move!

The more Tang Thirty-Six thought, the prouder and happier he felt. His laughter grew louder, his expression more arrogant.

When Chen Changsheng understood the cause and effect of this matter, he was also excessively shocked, and he also couldn't help but feel very emotional.

This sense that fate had made its own arrangements felt to him like he was once more experiencing a lost period of time.

But Wang Zhice and the others did not know of that period of time, nor did they know that story, so they did not understand why Tang Thirty-Six was laughing.

To Shang Xingzhou, Chen Changsheng's smile was far more repulsive than that sword.

"You want to use one rusty sword to change everything?"

A mask of cold covered his face as he looked at Chen Changsheng.

The color in his eyes was also very faint, like recently frozen ice.

In the deepest part of his eyes, a fire was burning.

He took in a deep breath and a massive wind stirred in the forest.

The fire borrowed the wind to quickly kindle to life, instantly traveling from the depths of his eyes to the surface.

Those dull eyes abruptly became the color of lava, burning with terrifying heat.

The wind blew straight upward, blasting away the clouds above the Orthodox Academy, and a little black dot followed them to hide

itself away.

With the clouds dispelled, the sun could reveal its true face.

A Qi descended from the sky. To be more precise, it fell together with the sunlight to fall on Shang Xingzhou's body.

This Qi was not at all pure but was actually rather mixed. In no way did this affect its power, only added a few hints of brutality.

The arrival of this Qi caused all the snow on the ground to instantly melt.

The temperature in the Orthodox Academy seemed to have greatly risen.

Shang Xingzhou was still standing at his original place, but he seemed to be up in the sky.

His body seemed so massive that it seemed to span the gap between the heavens and earth.

In the eyes of the distant Xu Yourong and others, he seemed to transform into the world's most precipitous mountain.

In the eyes of the nearby Chen Changsheng, he looked more like that white tiger in White Emperor City that had obscured half the sky.

Back then it was the White Emperor's soul, but now it was Shang Xingzhou himself.

The puddles of water instantly evaporated, and the mists swiftly purified. The fallen leaves amongst the yellowed grass began to curl along their edges.

This brutal and blazing Qi had come from the sun, but also from Shang Xingzhou's body. Now the internal and external Qis met.

With a boom, Shang Xingzhou's clothes began to burn, his sleeves transforming into countless flying butterflies, leaving his arms bare.

His sleeve had been burned completely into ash, naturally erasing any sign of the hole that Chen Changsheng's sword had torn in it.

Shang Xingzhou used both his hands to grasp his sword, muscles bulging on his arms, looking like sails swelling in the wind and also like they had been cast from iron. They didn't seem real, but their existence also seemed absolutely undeniable, brimming with the most vigorous life force.

In a few seconds, he seemed to have grown centuries younger.

As he walked toward Chen Changsheng, he looked nothing like an elder.

.....

.....

.....

.....

When the clouds parted and the sunlight spilled down, warming the Orthodox Academy, Xu Yourong thought of a certain possibility.

Her expression subtly shifted, but she did not go over. Chen Changsheng still had a sword, and Wang Zhice was still here.

It was obvious that Wang Zhice already know of this secret, as he was completely unmoved.

Perhaps this had never been much of a secret to the elders of that generation.

Leaning on his walking stick, Yuren stood by the table, his gaze piercing through the black hair and broken wall to fall deep within the forest. His thoughts were inscrutable.

Tang Thirty-Six had stopped laughing long ago. He was so shocked that he couldn't speak, only think, just how is this possible?

.....

.....

"The Blazing Sun Style?"

"The Blazing Sun Style!"

"Who's using the Blazing Sun Style! How can it be so tyrannical and traditional! Who is it!"

The change in Qi within the Orthodox Academy had already been sensed in Hundred Flowers Lane, triggering a chain of shocked cries.

The ten-some Chen clan princes were all flabbergasted. Only when they remembered that Chen Changsheng also had the surname Chen did they quiet down.

They had never treated Chen Changsheng as a relative, but he was still of imperial blood. In their view, it was not completely unimaginable for Chen Changsheng to be able to learn the Blazing Sun Style. This was because they did not know that his sun wheel had been destroyed when he was still in the womb.

The Prince of Zhongshan knew of this secret, so he had a rather gloomy expression, though it was hard to say what the exact reason was.

The Prince of Xiang opened his eyes, a spark flashing in the deepest part of his eyes. Without even time to burn, it swiftly extinguished.

He knew that it wasn't Chen Changsheng, so it could only be Shang Xingzhou.

But Shang Xingzhou was not a member of the Imperial clan, so how could he practice the Blazing Sun Style?

Just what was the relationship between Shang Xingzhou and Emperor Taizong?

Suddenly, a harsh light flashed through the Prince of Xiang's eyes

and he shouted, "What do you plan on doing?"

The area in front of the Orthodox Academy's gate resounded with the scraping of metal and the drawing of crossbow strings.

The atmosphere became extremely tense.

Because when the clouds parted and the sunlight descended, Wang Po had made a movement.

Raising his brow.

The saying about every sip and every bite is an idiom about how one cannot escape destiny, as everything is preordained. The saying about the grass snake is used as a description for foreshadowing, as though the grass snake leaves few tracks, one can still find some evidence if one looks carefully.

Chapter 1111 – Do You Dare Ask Where the Swords Are?

Wang Po possessed a unique pair of eyebrows.

More specifically, their uniqueness came from the distance between his brows and his eyes.

His brow and eyes were rather close to each other, and the ends of his eyebrows sagged, leading him to look rather impoverished.

And yet, when his brows rose, they would part from his eyes.

It was like the heavens and earth were parting.

At the same time, the end of his brow would rise up like a spear, magnificently soaring to the dome of heaven.

In short, when he raised his brows, he no longer had anything to do with the word 'impoverished'.

Moreover, it was often the case that when he raised his brows, his shoulders would rise with them.

Compared to his eyebrows, Wang Po's shoulders were more famous, because his shoulders spent more time drooped and were easier to see.

And when he moved his shoulders, he was often striking out with his blade.

Such a time was now, as a chilling blade intent abruptly appeared in Hundred Flowers Lane and soared into the sky.

Several hundred divine crossbows and all the weapons wielded by the experts of the Imperial Court were aimed at Wang Po.

The Prince of Xiang's expression was grave. He had taken both his hands off the paunch gathered around his belt.

Wang Po said nothing, only calmly stared at the Orthodox Academy.

Just like the Prince of Xiang, he knew that the person using the Blazing Sun Style was not Chen Changsheng.

Then it could only be Shang Xingzhou.

Just what was the relationship between Shang Xingzhou and Emperor Taizong?

Was he also a member of the Imperial clan?

Wang Po was not thinking about these questions.

Instead, he was thinking about several descriptions that his clan's elders had only managed to preserve through great difficulty.

In those descriptions, the most striking were the four words 'Clan destitute, people massacred', dripping in blood, but there were also many other miserable scenes.

Those scenes all included a young man of dour temperament. According to the judgment of the Wang clan's ancestors, that young man was the true instigator behind the raids on their household. He had most likely been a member of the Imperial clan, but none of their investigations, whether at the time or in the aftermath, had been able to identify him.

In brief, that young man had put the Wang clan through many bleak and miserable storms.

Wang Po had never met Emperor Taizong, but Emperor Taizong was still his enemy, because this was the hatred of his clan.

That young man was naturally his enemy as well.

He originally thought that the young man had already vanished into the long river of history, but today, he discovered that this man might very well be alive.

The atmosphere outside the Orthodox Academy became abnormally tense.

Wang Po silently stared at the academy gate.

In the end, his shoulders drooped back down.

His brows sagged back down at the same time.

Thousands of sighs emerged as one within Hundred Flowers Lane.

Not out of regret, but celebration.

.....

.....

The Blazing Sun style was an extremely powerful and unique cultivation method.

The tens of thousands of Daoist techniques in the world were all based on the conversion of star radiance to true essence.

Only the Blazing Sun Style gathered not star radiance, but sunfire.

Sunfire was not as pure or gentle as star radiance, but it was far more powerful.

But it was also precisely because it was too fierce and hot that cultivators simply could not gather it in order to convert it to true essence.

Over the countless millennia since the Heavenly Tome Monoliths had descended to the world and the Human race had begun to cultivate, only the Chen clan, through their unique sun wheel, could cultivate this method.

Both the Daoist scriptures and the annals of history took this as a blessing the Heavenly Dao had conferred on the Chen clan. Thus, whether in peace or war, the Chen clan had always possessed a special status in Tianliang County and the entire continent. They seemed innately layered in a divine radiance.

A thousand years ago, the Chen clan had produced countless experts, like the young hero Chen Xuanba, or like Emperor Taizong.

Of course, there was also that person who had been rumored to be a wise god of war: the Prince of Chu.

Even now, the Chen Imperial clan continued to produce a large number of experts. The ten-some princes in Hundred Flowers Lane were all experts, and the Prince of Xiang had even entered the Divine Domain. Together with the younger clansmen spread out in the provinces and counties, they truly presented a most powerful force.

However, in the last few years, with the Tianhai Divine Empress in the past and Shang Xingzhou present, this strength had no opportunity to truly exhibit its power.

But how could Shang Xingzhou practice the Blazing Sun Style? Was he also a member of the Imperial clan? Just what was his relationship with Emperor Taizong?

These questions flitted through Chen Changsheng's mind but quickly vanished, leaving no trace behind.

He had developed this hypothesis in the Garden of Zhou, so he was just receiving the evidence now.

And besides, Shang Xingzhou had once more walked up to him.

Both hands on his sword, he chopped it down at Chen Changsheng's head.

It was an extremely simple slash, no technique or profundity within. It was just a straight slash downward.

Sunlight shone on his tightly bound black hair, reflecting light.

Sunlight shone on his bare arms, reflecting light.

Sunlight shone on his Daoist sword, reflecting light.

He looked just like a god.

The sword in his hand was severing everything in the world.

First was the sky.

A line, both real and fake, appeared in the azure sky.

A sword intent, awe-inspiring without compare, accompanied by a dazzling light, descended toward Chen Changsheng's head.

Chen Changsheng did not know if he could block it.

He was somewhat nervous, and the light of the sword was too bright, so he squinted.

The subtle actions of humans were often connected to each other.

When he squinted his eyes, his hand subconsciously tightened.

And then, his palm tightly gripped the hilt of his sword.

The hilt was somewhat tough and rather sticky from being hidden inside a tree for several years, whether from moss or mud.

This was not a strange feeling, as he had held countless swords before, but it was also not a familiar feeling. He confirmed that he had never held this sword before.

There had been too many swords in the Sword Pool, so it was impossible for him to be familiar with each one. He also did not know of this sword's name or background.

But he knew that the object in his hand was straight, hard, and sharp.

This was a sword.

So it was fine.

.....

.....

Sword clashed with sword.

It was like bitter cold sent down to the south from the snowy plains meeting a wave of heat from the Western Sea.

There was a thunderous crack.

The agitated lake waters became waves, and then they were further agitated into a reverse waterfall. Falling back down as a torrent of rain, they cleansed the world from another angle.

Several dozen thick and ancient trees creaked as they slowly collapsed.

The ground sank as shards of wood and branches flew over it.

The wall of the Hundred Herb Garden was covered in scars, deep and shallow.

Nearby, the array of the Imperial Palace automatically triggered, causing light to fall down, and draping everything in an enigmatic attire.

In Wang Zhice's eyes, this scene looked very much like Daoist Wu's most recent painting. The brushstrokes were very simple, even deliberately crude, but the colors were extremely audacious.

...Like that red that looked both like blood and rust.

The dust settled.

Chen Changsheng was half-kneeling by the lake, blood dripping from the corners of his lips.

Even more frightening was that he no longer had a sword in his hand.

That sword had fallen on an extremely distant patch of grass, thrust at an angle into the ground. It looked like the remnants of a flag, or a monolith.

This sword was still trembling, softly buzzing, not out of mourning, but apology.

Shang Xingzhou appeared in front of Chen Changsheng.

It was also no easy task for him to break that defensive sword style that Su Li had passed down to Chen Changsheng.

But he had the Blazing Sun Style.

He was still suppressing his strength to beneath the Divine Domain, but the Blazing Sun Style allowed him to possess unimaginable and endless strength.

The most formidable sword style could not endure this crushing power for very long.

In this process, Shang Xingzhou had paid a greater price than Chen Changsheng, consumed more true essence.

But Chen Changsheng had no sword.

Shang Xingzhou indifferently regarded him as he raised his sword once more.

He did not believe that his disciple would be so lucky as to randomly find another sword in a broken tree.

Strangely, no panic could be spied on Chen Changsheng's face. His eyes were still as calm as a lake.

And then, he thrust his hand into the lake and took out another sword.

Chapter 1112 – They're Everywhere

One could catch fish in a lake because there were fish inside, but there were no swords in a lake.

And besides, Chen Changsheng had not caught a sword—he had just taken it out.

This was a simpler action that indicated that he knew there was a sword there.

Like he was performing a magic trick, he took a sword out of the lake.

And then he thrust it at Shang Xingzhou.

Water spilled off the sword while a sword glow rose from it, revealing the sword with dazzling clarity.

The lake shore became bright, the splashing water like trees of silver or stars in the night sky.

Ten-some points of starlight brightened as a figure blurred, following the orbits of the stars in the night sky.

Shang Xingzhou retreated along the stars, instantly appearing ten-some zhang away.

Squelch.

A tear appeared on his collar.

Blood seeped out, a petal of an inky plum blossom on his blue Daoist robe.

"Master, just concede."

Chen Changsheng said to Shang Xingzhou.

Water trickled down from the sword in his hand and fell against the rocks on the shore, the dripping almost hypnotizing.

Shang Xingzhou did not reply. He calmly stepped forward, once more appearing before him.

Both hands on his sword, he raised it over his head.

His bare arms glimmered under the sun. He was like a statue, perfectly sculpted to exhibit its strength.

Still there was no technique or profundity, just a simple slash.

The air screeched as the sword chafed against it, sparking a brilliant flame.

The blazing and brutal Qi rose from both Shang Xingzhou's body and the sun.

The stain of blood on the Daoist robe instantly evaporated.

The water on Chen Changsheng's sword also vaporized into nothing.

The bright and beautiful sword glow rose once more, but it was not aimed at Shang Xingzhou.

Chen Changsheng knew that Shang Xingzhou would not react to his sword, so it did not matter how fast it was.

He could only block.

Bang!

Two swords met once more.

Another thunderous boom spread out from the lake shore, surmounting the academy walls to resonate over the entire capital.

Another downpour descended as walls tilted and trees fell. The howling wind threw the loose rocks on the shore all over the place while lake water irrigated the surroundings.

Ten-some pools, big and small, appeared on the lawn.

Shang Xingzhou and Chen Changsheng had vanished.

They next appeared on the lawn in front of the library.

The stone steps leading to the library were covered in cracks and had slightly sunk into the ground.

Chen Changsheng was lying on the steps, his hands propped on the ground as he prepared to stand.

The sword he had taken from the lake had also been sent flying.

His Stupid Sword had not been broken, but it had also failed to receive Shang Xingzhou's tyrannical sword.

Wind flapped against the blue Daoist robe, which was now sporting several new holes.

Shang Xingzhou walked toward the library.

Without turning his head, Chen Changsheng thrust his right hand into the shattered steps and pulled.

Metal scraped against rock as a sword appeared in his hand.

His movements were so natural that it seemed like this had been long-prepared, practiced countless times.

Even the most inconceivable event would find it hard to surprise someone if it was repeated several times.

Shang Xingzhou's expression did not change.

Chen Changsheng stood up and sincerely said, "Master, just concede."

Shang Xingzhou still said nothing. He silently walked forward, his hands slashing his sword down.

Sunlight glimmered on his sword and bare arms.

The inscriptions on the sword and the veins of his muscles were crystal-clear.

The aura of life and the odor of death were equally intense, intoxicating or frightening like a strong wine.

With a giant boom, dust exploded into the air.

An extremely deep furrow appeared in front of the library.

The glossy ebony floorboards were thrown into the air where

they burst into splinters.

Old books flew everywhere amongst the fallen shelves.

He had once spent night after night here, observing the stars.

Luoluo had spent many nights here as well, keeping him company.

But his master had spent even more time here.

The windows shattered.

Chen Changsheng fell into the fountain in the front courtyard, his body drenched.

The fangs of the sacred lion statue were also spurting water.

Columns of water the size of fingers dribbled onto his head in a rather comical fashion.

This place was already very close to the academy gate, so it was possible to hear the anxious breathing and shouts from Hundred Flowers Lane.

The crowd in Hundred Flowers Lane heard him fall into the water fountain.

Wang Po, the Prince of Xiang, the Prince of Zhongshan, Linghai Zhiwang, and other such experts could even use their ears to roughly 'see' what was going on in the Orthodox Academy.

The fountain was suddenly cast into shadow.

A massive figure blocked out the sky.

Shang Xingzhou gave no chance for Chen Changsheng to catch his breath, appearing once more.

Several dozen zhang away, Wang Zhice and Tang Thirty-Six appeared on the lawn.

Yuren was probably still in the Hundred Herb Garden.

Xu Yourong appeared by the forest on the other side, her white

wings flapping behind her.

Where had the little Black Dragon gone?

"I'm very curious."

Wang Zhice watched Chen Changsheng stand up from the fountain, and asked, "Could there still be swords? Then where would they have been placed?"

The statue of the lion was imposing and the fountain itself was very large, but its pool of water was very shallow.

The teachers and students of the Orthodox Academy passed by this place every day, so it would have been very difficult to conceal a sword inside.

Tang Thirty-Six said nothing while Chen Changsheng used his actions to reply.

He stood on tiptoes and thrust his hand into the lion's mouth. As water spurted out around him, he took a sword out.

When she saw this, Xu Yourong seemed to think of something that rather disgusted her, leading her to cover her mouth.

Wang Zhice sighed, "This is also okay?"

Tang Thirty-Six arched his brow and asked, "Why isn't it okay?"

Wang Zhice sighed, "I originally thought that it was just that one sword."

Tang Thirty-Six replied, "Wrong, I've hidden many swords here."

Wang Zhice asked, "Just how many swords are there?"

"They're everywhere."

Tang Thirty-Six spread out his arms and closed his eyes in rapturous intoxication.

"As long as he's in the Orthodox Academy, he can't lose."

.....

.....

The fountain was suddenly cut through, the lion's tail dropping down, leaving an extremely smooth surface.

Shang Xingzhou's and Chen Changsheng's swords clashed once more.

Thunder pealed again.

This time, however, it persisted for a very long time without any pause.

The cries of swords could be heard all over the Orthodox Academy, punctuated with terrifying booms.

The figures of master and disciple could not be seen.

Occasionally, a sword would fly out of the forest or the library, stabbing into the grass or a broken wall, where they quivered.

In this period, Chen Changsheng found many swords, but they were also sent flying out of his hands by Shang Xingzhou.

Suddenly, the cries of swords stopped.

The Orthodox Academy became abnormally silent.

The quietest place was a building to the west.

The style of the building indicated that this was a seminar hall for preaching the Dao, but for some reason, the walls had been painted a cinnabar red, making it stand out.

Two rows of maple trees lined the building. Perhaps because of an array, they were an autumn red regardless of the season.

The blue Daoist robe was covered in a dense patchwork of holes, still stained with sword intent.

Blood was constantly seeping out from them, making for a fiendish sight.

Shang Xingzhou had suffered many wounds.

Chen Changsheng had suffered even greater ones. His face was pale and his body was covered in blood. The hands hanging at his side were trembling.

"Do you still have any swords?"

Shang Xingzhou asked.

Chen Changsheng took a short sword from out of the flower pot next to him and said, "This is the last one."

Chapter 1113 – Maple Forest Pavilion

Before the Mausoleum of Books, it had been several years since Chen Changsheng and Shang Xingzhou's last meeting, and after the Mausoleum of Books, they began to treat each other as strangers, even enemies. But they were still master and disciple, having lived together in Xining Village's old temple for ten-some years. They both had an extremely deep understanding of the other, able to tell what the other was thinking from the smallest of movements, even the change in the look of one's eyes. This was what was meant to have a feel for each other.

Shang Xingzhou had felt Chen Changsheng's mood as he was taking the sword out of the flower pot, resulting in that question of his.

But after receiving Chen Changsheng's confirmation, he did not loosen his guard, nor did he feel proud. Instead, he asked another question.

"Do you know what this place is?"

Chen Changsheng was the Principal of the Orthodox Academy and had lived here for many years, but he truly did not know what this red building was. The Orthodox Academy was too large and the years he had spent living and studying here had been limited to the forest near the Imperial City and the area around the library, not even one-tenth of the Orthodox Academy's full size.

Shang Xingzhou said, "This place is Maple Forest Pavilion. Back then, I moved those two rows of maple trees from the Bureau of Ecclesiastic Education to here."

Chen Changsheng now understood why this place had looked so familiar.

"Mei Lisha was my friend."

Shang Xingzhou looked at his face and said with rather mixed

emotions, "He always admired you, which I never really understood. Now, I am slowly beginning to understand."

Chen Changsheng didn't know whether he should feel proud or relieved at these words, or if he should let that sourness at the bottom of his heart soak in them. He only remained silent.

At this moment, was there any meaning in saying such words? Perhaps it was because Shang Xingzhou had confirmed that Chen Changsheng was about to run out of swords and, knowing that his disciple was about to lose or perhaps even die, was feeling emotional? But what was so important about the origins of this Maple Forest Pavilion?

Shang Xingzhou turned to look at the building and said, "The final battle from that year took place here."

That year was twenty-some years ago, on the night of the bloody incident in the Orthodox Academy.

The Maple Forest Pavilion might have been so striking because it had been drenched in the blood from that night.

"Many people died on that night, many young people. They were just as outstanding as you, perhaps even more."

Shang Xingzhou looked back at Chen Changsheng and said, "Over my life, I've seen far too much life and death, so I really don't care anymore. Do not hope that my heart will go soft."

The meaning of these words was exceptionally clear.

If Chen Changsheng still did not concede, he would not mind cutting Chen Changsheng down with his sword.

Chen Changsheng did not concede, did not even speak. Still he remained silent.

He raised his right hand, the short sword held across his eyes, cold light gleaming as dirt sprinkled to the floor.

Shang Xingzhou understood his choice and walked toward him.

An extremely clear trail of footsteps appeared on the floorboards. Each footstep shone with light before starting to burn.

With the clouds driven away, the sun shone with unequalled brilliance in the blue sky over the Orthodox Academy.

In the dazzling and blinding light, the Maple Forest Pavilion truly did seem to catch fire. The maple trees outside it swayed in the wind, appearing like tongues of flame.

This was fire formed from the kindling of countless years of blood. The faint smell of char it gave off was imbued with a sense of heroism and majesty.

The light cast by the fire of blood on Shang Xingzhou made him look abnormally large, like he was a devil and god in one.

This was his life, and also Wang Zhice's, the Tang Old Master's, and the lives of all those other elders.

They would not relinquish their ideals and persistence for anything.

A clear whistle shrieked through the air.

A massive gale blew through the Maple Forest Pavilion.

The maple trees swayed even more intensely, the tongues of flame wanting to burn up even the vault of heaven.

The sword in Shang Xingzhou's hands slashed down, bringing with it a gout of bloody fire.

The bloody fire was bright and garish, but his figure was dark and cold, creating a particularly stark contrast.

With a boom, the bloody fire splattered into countless flames, igniting the floorboards and columns of the Maple Forest Pavilion.

The short sword flew out the window while Chen Changsheng retreated ten-some steps, vomiting blood.

Shang Xingzhou raised his sword and walked once more to him.

No panic could be seen on Chen Changsheng's face.

He said to Shang Xingzhou, "Just concede, Master."

From the moment he found the first sword, he had begun saying this.

In the lake, in front of the library, and in many other places, he would pick up a sword and say it again.

And then, those swords would be knocked away by Shang Xingzhou.

Now, he had lost his final sword, but he was still saying this.

Shang Xingzhou's face showed no derision, nor any confusion.

It seemed that he knew where Chen Changsheng's confidence came from.

Chen Changsheng raised his right hand.

Other than air and the light of the fire, there was nothing in it.

Was he going to pull a sword out of mid-air?

Howling suddenly came from nearby.

With a whoosh, a cold light flew through the window and then vanished.

The short sword had returned to Chen Changsheng's hand.

Soon after, countless howls and shrieks could be heard from all over the Orthodox Academy.

Each one was shrill, naturally imbued with a sense of sharpness.

As the howls and shrieks increased, they became a torrential downpour, one of falling arrows.

Countless sword glows came out from under plums, from inside trees, from out of the water.

Old plum trees were neatly cut open, looking like incense sticks that had been burning for three days and three nights.

Ten holes appeared in the broken trunk of an ancient tree, making it really seem like a flute used by a god.

The lake was covered in ripples as if several hundred koi were struggling out from the fetid mud at the bottom.

These were the swords that Tang Thirty-Six had hidden in the Orthodox Academy.

The ones that Chen Changsheng had found one after the other.

The ones that had been knocked away by Shang Xingzhou.

They flew through the sky...

Toward the Maple Forest Pavilion.

Several dozen sword glows arrived at Chen Changsheng's side.

Shang Xingzhou looked at him and said, "Not enough."

Chen Changsheng's finger lightly knocked on the short sword.

A bright clang resonated through the building, bringing with it the cool and pure sword intent of several dozen swords.

With a light snap, Shang Xingzhou's topknot broke.

For the seemingly ordinary black topknot to break at this moment was extremely unordinary.

Innumerable cold lights surged out from it, like a great river that seemed to be jumping for joy.

A fierce wind sliced the maple trees to pieces and made red shards madly dance in the air.

The flying eaves of the pavilion were crisscrossed with countless straight lines while countless holes were cut in the red walls and pillars.

A flame about to be ignited by the sun still needed to be attached to a physical object.

With no bark and the pavilion about to totter, could the bloody

fire last?

As those tongues of flame licking toward the sky gradually disappeared, their colors dulled, and then they finally extinguished into nothingness.

The sun spilled its light over the ruined [Maple Forest Pavilion](#).

Several thousand swords quietly hovered around Chen Changsheng.

Clear and powerful sword intents filled the entire world.

These sword intents seemed to be connected in an array, the energy circulating through them never-ending and multiplying, seemingly unbreakable.

Chen Changsheng looked at Shang Xingzhou and asked, "Is it enough now?"

The name of this building comes from the 1986 Hong Kong movie 'A Better Tomorrow'. It is the name of a restaurant in which Mark, played by Chow Yun-Fat, takes revenge for the imprisonment of one of his friends by single-handedly killing a gang leader and his bodyguards. Mark was the fan-favorite of the movie and apparently Mao Ni was no exception. He writes in a note that he began planning this scene not long after he started writing Way of Choices.

Chapter 1114 – Shang Xingzhou Has Lost

The Maple Forest Pavilion was half-collapsed, the ground strewn with the remnants of walls and windows.

The falling sunlight, filtered through the slowly returning thin clouds and the tall red maples, had become rather dim.

The dim light was constantly reflected by several thousand swords, not becoming any brighter, instead appearing like light reflected off a pool of water.

Chen Changsheng loosened his grip, allowing that short sword that had been hidden in the flower pot for several years to fly away and regroup with the rain of swords in the sky.

He stretched his hand into the air and plucked out a sword like he was plucking a fruit at the height of autumn.

It was similarly a very short sword, but this one was exceptionally bright and incomparably sharp. It was called Stainless.

The topknot had been split apart, the halved hairtie now somewhere amongst the debris.

The Vault Sheath had fallen at Shang Xingzhou's feet.

The sword sheath known as the Vault Sheath had once been a valued treasure of the Li Palace. Ever since Chen Changsheng had left Xining Village, it had always been at his side.

What might have been an idle gesture from Shang Xingzhou at the beginning had finally become one of his most inconceivably well-hidden moves today.

At the start of the fight, he had snatched the Vault Sheath from Chen Changsheng's hand.

With the Vault Sheath cut off from Chen Changsheng's spiritual sense, he could not summon those swords.

He was forced into desperate straits; one could even call it a dead end.

But afterward, he found one sword after another in the Orthodox Academy, and all those swords had a sword intent.

The sheath could cut off his spiritual sense, but for some reason, it could not completely cut off sword intent.

Sword intent was the will of the sword.

The will of these swords was to summon, to stand shoulder to shoulder, for comrades and friends to join hands once more.

At this moment, the sword sheath could no longer block all the swords, even though it was called the Vault Sheath.

Because those sword intents were revealing their edges.

.....

.....

.....

.....

The Prince of Xiang's eyes were a little red, perhaps aggravated by the bits of wood drifting over from the Orthodox Academy.

Or perhaps it was because he had seen, through the thick walls of the academy, those sword intents revealing their might.

He raised his sleeve and wiped his eyes, then he suddenly turned and left Hundred Flowers Lane, causing a large turmoil.

Wang Po glanced at him but did not follow.

In a short time, the Prince of Xiang's figure appeared on the Bridge of Helplessness.

The winter had passed and all things were being reborn. The spring was about to arrive and the Luo River was already thawed, slowly flowing with dregs of ice in tow.

Two clear trails of tears dripped down from the Prince of Xiang's cheeks.

His face was round and large, so this was not a sorrowful sight, but a comical one.

Standing next to him was a white-haired old man with a similarly large and round face. He also had a rather comical appearance, or perhaps one could call it an extremely happy face.

The old man was called Cao Yunping and he was the Elder of Heavenly Secrets' nephew, once a member of the Storms of the Eight Directions. Enraged and anguished at his loss to Su Li's sword, he ignored the exhortations from the Elder of Heavenly Secrets and the Tianhai Divine Empress, and crippled his entire cultivation. In the end, he went mad, with a problem occurring in his brain.

Cao Yunping had rarely appeared in public in the last few years.

Only a small number of people knew that Chen Changsheng had met him on his journey to White Emperor City.

He had originally been invited by some authority to make trouble for Chen Changsheng, but he ended up being convinced by Chen Changsheng to put the overarching situation of the Human race above all else.

And then, he went to the Western Sea and killed Mu Jiushi.

Yes, this expert of the Divine Domain had already recovered his cultivation and was even more powerful than before.

As for his intelligence, no one knew if he was really as innocent as a child or if he had just learned how to play one.

But why had he appeared in the capital today, and why was he meeting the Prince of Xiang over the Luo River?

Had the Prince of Xiang been the one who had invited him to make trouble for Chen Changsheng?

"Why are you crying?"

Cao Yunping looked at the Prince of Xiang and asked with deep sincerity, "Because you have no one willing to give you candy to eat?"

Without waiting for the Prince of Xiang to answer, he hurriedly added, "Xu Yourong only gave me one bag of candy. I certainly don't have any to share with you."

These two simple questions seemed childish, cute, and even pitiful, but they had already revealed enough information.

And if one were speaking of negotiation terms, these were also rather explicit.

The Prince of Xiang used a handtowel to wipe the tears from corners of his eyes, then he ruefully said, "I am sad because the venerable Daoist is going to lose and the days after this will be very hard going."

Cao Yunping seemed to be dumbstruck by these words, and then he grinned and said with childlike innocence, "You liar; that's not possible."

Yes, there was absolutely no reason for Shang Xingzhou to lose to Chen Changsheng. The gap in strength between the two was simply too vast.

Yet there existed a prerequisite for this fight between master and disciple, and it was that Shang Xingzhou had to suppress his cultivation to beneath the Divine Domain.

As one able to wield the South Stream Temple sword array all by himself, the current Chen Changsheng could be considered the most powerful person beneath the Divine Domain. Not even the Demon Lord or Qiushan Jun would be a match for him. Even looking back across the tens of thousands of years of cultivation history, it would still be very difficult to find someone as powerful as him before they had broken into the Divine Domain.

Just a glance past the wall had caused the Prince of Xiang to start to cry, because he had seen those sword intents, and also because he was truly rather disappointed.

It seemed that Shang Xingzhou really had lost.

.....

.....

.....

.....

The Maple Forest Pavilion was very quiet.

The Orthodox Academy was very quiet.

Winds blew across the lake and the maple trees, passing through the ruins of Maple Forest Pavilion. They were then sliced to pieces by the swords into the sky, and when they reformed, they created very complicated noises.

Some sounded like sobs, others like resentful hisses.

"I will not lose to you."

Shang Xingzhou declared to Chen Changsheng, "I taught you."

This was his principle, his reason.

'I will not lose to you' was really just 'I cannot lose to you'.

Shang Xingzhou took a step forward and said a single word.

It was a seemingly simple word, consisting of just one syllable.

But when one heard this word, it would reveal its true form, manifesting tones of incredible complexity that rose and fell.

This extremely short amount of time seemed to contained an infinite amount of information.

This was not a human language, but the remnants of an ancient civilization, a world of wisdom almost impossible to describe, as magnificent as the sea of stars.

As the blue Daoist robe swayed in the wind, the dragon cry rose to reverberate across the entire Orthodox Academy.

Shang Xingzhou's eyes became completely white, making him seem like both god and ghost.

An unimaginable timeworn Qi swept toward Chen Changsheng and his storm of swords.

Chen Changsheng stared into Shang Xingzhou's eyes and suddenly also said a word.

This word was also a single syllable, and it was also indescribably complex, impossible to comprehend and hailing from a most ancient era.

From high up in the cloud-covered sky came a dragon cry, bursting with surprise and delight.

Countless swords descended according to Chen Changsheng's heart.

With awe-inspiring sword intent, the swords cried out in an unending stream, drawing out countless deep and straight marks in the sky.

There was a light clap.

The wind stopped.

The world once more became absolutely silent.

The rain of swords was on the verge of descent, but they remained stationary in the sky.

Shang Xingzhou stood in front of Chen Changsheng, covered in blood.

His right hand was clasped around Chen Changsheng's throat.

He just needed to slightly clench it and Chen Changsheng would die.

At this moment, Wang Zhice spoke.

"You've lost."

.....

.....

.....

.....

Chapter 1115 – Who Has Won?

Gravel rolled around the ground, blown by the wind. Its soft rumble mixed with the sound of the swords cutting against the wind, combining into an even more plaintive and mournful sound.

It was very quiet inside Maple Forest Pavilion. Tang Thirty-Six and Xu Yourong said nothing as they silently watched Shang Xingzhou and Chen Changsheng.

Only Wang Zhice's voice was floating in the breeze.

This battle that was soon to alter the course of history had finally reached a result.

But just what had happened a moment ago?

Shang Xingzhou was holding Chen Changsheng's throat, able to determine his life or death, but Wang Zhice was saying that he had lost?

Shang Xingzhou looked at Chen Changsheng and suddenly asked, "When did you learn it?"

.....

.....

In the Hundred Herb Garden, Yuren stood by the stone table, staring at the academy wall.

Above the clouds, Zhizhi looked down at that building, saying nothing.

The world was very large and contained many people, but only these two understood what Shang Xingzhou meant.

In that final moment of the battle, Shang Xingzhou had said a word that was both simple and extremely complex, unfathomably complex.

This word was bursting with information.

It was Dragon language.

The contents of this word were a Daoist technique from an incomparably ancient era.

This Daoist technique was recorded in a Daoist scripture.

Many years ago, by the stream near Xining Village's old temple, Chen Changsheng and Yuren had also seen this scripture.

They were unfamiliar with the words of this book and did not recognize them.

They went to ask their master.

Their master told them that this was the last book of the three thousand scriptures of the Daoist Canon and consisted of sixteen hundred and one characters. It was rumored to contain the final meaning of the Heavenly Dao, but no one had ever been able to completely comprehend it.

It was only today that Chen Changsheng was finally sure that his master had not been speaking the truth, or perhaps had been keeping things back.

Shang Xingzhou had clearly studied that scripture, and he had learned a great deal.

That ancient and timeworn Daoist technique had let him exhibit an ability that surpassed cultivation levels, successfully breaking through the South Stream Temple sword array and letting him appear in front of Chen Changsheng.

If everything went according to plan, he would have been the victor in this battle of master and disciple.

But it was in that moment that Chen Changsheng had also said one word.

It was a similarly complex and incomprehensible word, containing infinite information.

It was also Dragon language.

It was also an incredibly ancient Daoist technique.

Two dragon cries resonated in response to each other.

Two Qis reflected against each other.

Two Daos met.

A rain of swords descended.

If Shang Xingzhou continued to suppress his cultivation level, he would assuredly lose, perhaps even die.

Thus, at the final moment, he removed the suppression on his cultivation and used the strength of the Divine Domain.

A thousand swords cut away at his clothes, unleashing a great light.

When rain met the sun, no matter how beautiful the sight, it would eventually go up in smoke. Even the snowy plain would have to melt.

Chen Changsheng's talent, brilliance, and Dao were crushed by the strength of a higher realm.

Shang Xingzhou's hand clasped around his throat.

But he could not grasp the throat of fate.

He had used the strength of the Divine Domain.

So he had lost.

The true turning point of this battle was when Chen Changsheng had said that word.

Shang Xingzhou wanted to know how this had come to be.

"That year I first came to the capital."

Chen Changsheng turned his head to look at the academy wall, nostalgia appearing on his face.

Over there was the Hundred Herb Garden, and farther behind it was the Imperial City.

"One night, Mo Yu tricked me into the Tong Palace. Later on, I came to know that this was on Martial Uncle's orders."

It had been the night of the Ivy Festival, the first time Chen Changsheng's name became known throughout the continent. Only a few people knew that before the start of the festivities, he had been imprisoned in the Tong Palace by Mo Yu, and then he met the legendary Black Frost Dragon. Although he had almost been killed and eaten, he ultimately ended up walking away with a great harvest.

That had been the first life-or-death trial Chen Changsheng had encountered after coming to the capital. In the following months and years, he would often think back to the events of that night, like those impassioned words he had said to the little Black Dragon. The more he thought, the more embarrassed he felt, and sometimes confused as well. Why had the Pope arranged for Mo Yu to do this?

Other than having the little Black Dragon become the Protector of the next Pope, was there a deeper meaning?

Chen Changsheng couldn't figure it out, so he stopped thinking about it.

Flowers drifted on the surface of the stream.

He decided to walk along this stream.

Against his original intentions, he began to learn Dragon language.

This was not a smooth process, and compared to buying various gourmet foods from the streets of the capital, it could even be called a challenge.

But as time passed, he would occasionally think back to that scripture he had memorized in Xining Village's old temple. Suddenly, he realized that he had begun to vaguely understand it.

In his three years in the snowy mountains, he would spend every

night continuing his lessons in Dragon language with the little Black Dragon, and then he would think back to that scripture.

It was truly very difficult, both Dragon language and that scripture.

In the end, he still didn't learn very much, in both Dragon language and that scripture.

But it was already enough for him to receive that Daoist technique under the prerequisite of Shang Xingzhou being completely unprepared.

And it was also just a moment ago when he had said that word that Chen Changsheng finally understood why the Pope had made this arrangement.

The Pope wanted him to receive the help of the little Black Dragon, and he had also wanted him to learn Dragon language.

The Pope hoped that he could comprehend the final book of the three thousand scriptures, and wanted to remind him that Shang Xingzhou had probably comprehended some ancient Daos from this final book.

Why was a reminder necessary? This was also a sort of reminder.

It was clear that the Pope had expected long ago that this master and disciple would end up falling out due to a difference in ideals.

Upon understanding all this, Chen Changsheng said this to Shang Xingzhou: "Master is not wrong. I truly was raised by Master, but Master, you did not bring me up, because you've never brought me up, never cared about me, never taught me anything. I was brought up by Senior Brother. He taught me many things. Senior Su Li also taught me many things, and there's also Martial Uncle. What they taught me far exceeded what you taught me."

Shang Xingzhou said nothing, only stared at Chen Changsheng.
He had lost.

He had lost to that disciple in front of him who he hated the most, and he had also lost to that disciple on the other side of the wall who he loved the most.

He had lost to that junior brother who he had always looked down on.

What should he do now?

Let go and leave like some stray old dog, or...

Shang Xingzhou closed his eyes.

It was very abrupt.

Wang Zhice, Tang Thirty-Six, and Xu Yourong were all surprised.

Only Chen Changsheng remained calm, apparently having long expected this sight.

Shang Xingzhou closed his eyes, but he did not loosen his grip.

His hand was very firmly wrapped around Chen Changsheng's throat.

Like a resilient pine tree, or a tough iron shackle.

Suddenly, he opened his eyes.

Blood seemed to be spreading out from the depths of his eyes, meeting his black pupils and turning brown.

It was oil seeping out from a crack in the old pine.

Rust on the surface of the iron shackle.

He looked at Chen Changsheng, his eyes serene and determined.

There was no attempt to conceal his killing intent.

.....

.....

"Since you were willing to bet, admit your defeat."

Wang Zhice shouted.

.....

.....

A walking stick lay on the stone table.

Yuren was no longer there.

.....

.....

Wings of white left two trails of fire in the air.

Xu Yourong vanished.

.....

.....

The wind rose and clouds surged.

The mountainous body of the Black Frost Dragon crushed down onto the Orthodox Academy.

.....

.....

Tang Thirty-Six clasped his hands to Shang Xingzhou and earnestly said, "There's no need for this."

.....

.....

Chen Changsheng said nothing.

He looked at Shang Xingzhou, his eyes similarly calm but even more determined.

Chapter 1116 – The Meaning of This Fight

The swords were like suspended rain, hanging over the ruins, aimed at the master and disciple.

The wind had stopped, so the gravel no longer rolled about, and so naturally made no sound. All was quiet.

The people in Hundred Flowers Lane noticed this silence and knew that something big had happened.

Life and death were naturally matters of true importance.

That astonishing killing intent within the Orthodox Academy struck everyone's minds dumb.

Suddenly, a zither note rose and countless strings snapped.

Crossbow bolts were fired haphazardly in front of the Orthodox Academy, Sacred Light illuminating the overcast sky.

The air was occasionally punctuated by the howl of an arrow or the groan of someone struck by an arrow.

When the chaotic situation was once more put under control, several pools of blood could be spotted in the lane, but Wang Po was nowhere to be seen.

Linghai Zhiwang was abnormally pale, worried as he was for the Pope's safety.

If something hadn't happened in the Orthodox Academy, if the Pope was not in danger, why had Wang Po suddenly moved at this tense moment and forced his way into the school?

A bitingly cold blade intent appeared in front of Maple Forest Pavilion.

A breeze rustled the red maples as Wang Po appeared in front of the ruins.

Surveying the area and sensing the remnants of the sword

intents and Daoist techniques in the air, he quickly gained a rough understanding of what was happening.

"Is there any need for the genius of a generation to be so unwilling?"

Wang Po's words were as sharp as blades. The cold breezes just stirred to life by the blade intent were instantly chopped into slivers.

Tang Thirty-Six sighed, "Yes, it's too shameful."

He spoke with such sincerity that it felt like he was speaking completely out of concern for Shang Xingzhou's reputation.

Xu Yourong said nothing.

At some point, she had appeared behind Chen Changsheng.

She was extremely close, only a few steps away.

This was an extremely risky course of action.

Her head was lowered, making it difficult to see the look on her face, but it was possible to see her eyelashes trembling.

A bright light made her eyelashes seemed like ginkgo leaves in the autumn.

This light came from the depths of her eyes, the blazing essence blood of the Phoenix.

She was prepared to at any moment to strike.

To save Chen Changsheng.

Or to die together with Shang Xingzhou.

The clouds fled in all directions as the mountainous dragon approached the ground, its shadow growing darker and darker.

Subsequently, the shadow ceased to deepen, because she had clearly seen what was going on and felt afraid.

And where was Yuren?

Wang Po had spoken correctly, and Tang Thirty-Six had also spoken with sincerity.

Given Shang Xingzhou's status, it was truly hard to believe that he would break his word.

And the fact that he was Chen Changsheng's master made the matter even more shameful.

Wang Zhice had been invited to the capital by him, but he would also not support him. He said, "If you do it, you know what I will do."

Shang Xingzhou was not necessarily afraid of Wang Zhice, even if he might be working together with Wang Po.

The Prince of Xiang and the princes of the Chen clan would support Shang Xingzhou, and he also had the military and the experts of the court.

His chances were good in this war, even though it was also rather risky.

He truly wanted to break his word and kill Chen Changsheng.

Just a moment ago, when Wang Zhice had said that he had lost, he had closed his eyes and seen many futures.

These were different futures that came from the different choices that he could make.

One of these seemed like the most beautiful of futures, so he had calculated it five times. In four of them, he had successfully repeated that perfect course of events.

That future also arose from his choice.

His fingers would soon strengthen their grip.

Chen Changsheng's head would drop to the ground like a ripe fruit and smash into pulp.

An extremely dangerous battle would come next. He might lose

or he might win, but there would basically be no threat to his life.

No matter the outcome, when the battle reached its most fevered pitch, he would voluntarily surrender, admit his sins to the young emperor and then retire to Luoyang.

In the next few years, internal conflicts would naturally rise from within the masterless Li Palace, and with external pressures, he would easily be able to regain his authority over the Orthodoxy.

In this period of time, he would have Prince Chen Liu die.

In the years after that, the Prince of Zhongshan would rebel, leading the armored cavalry from Blue Pass into the south.

At that time, he would return from Luoyang.

Even if he did not return, the Prince of Zhongshan's loss was still assured, but he would still seize the chance to have an open discussion with the young emperor and cast those old matters to the back of their minds.

Only this way could master and disciple be of one mind, could all the realm swear their loyalty.

In another few years, the world would be united, the people of one mind. As humanity prospered, it would be time once more for the northern expedition.

A million-man army looking down upon a city.

What city was that?

Xuelao City, of course.

.....

.....

This was the result that Shang Xingzhou had calculated.

This was a future of supreme beauty.

For this future, he could give up everything, sacrifice his all.

"Even if this will be scorned for the rest of history?"

Wang Zhice asked.

"I have spent several centuries behind the curtain. If Tianhai had not forced me out, perhaps even today I would not have stepped onto stage."

Shang Xingzhou said, "I am not even willing to leave my name on history, so why would I care if it was good or bad?"

Wang Zhice said no more, because he knew Shang Xingzhou truly was this sort of person.

Wang Po also said nothing, only tightened the grip of his right hand on his hilt.

Shang Xingzhou's killing intent to Chen Changsheng was extremely authentic.

His hand was on Chen Changsheng's throat.

Who could stop him?

The back wall of the Maple Forest Pavilion suddenly toppled. Yuren's figure appeared in the settling dust.

Shang Xingzhou calmly gazed at him.

Yuren shook his head very slowly, making it seem very heavy.

Shang Xingzhou understood what he meant.

Yuren was saying to him, "Your calculations cannot be realized.

"If you kill Junior Brother, I will never forgive you."

If master and disciple were not of one mind, the world would not swear their loyalty to them, and so that last scene would not take place.

Shang Xingzhou was unaffected.

Because he was confident in himself.

Shang Xingzhou believed that with enough time, Yuren would

understand all the pains he had taken.

But why had he still not done it?

Perhaps it was because someone was acting too calm?

That person was about to die.

To die to a most shameless person.

He had every reason to be angry.

He could erupt with curses.

He could give an impassioned speech.

He could also cover Shang Xingzhou's face in spit.

But he did nothing.

As Shang Xingzhou was speaking with Wang Zhice, he just quietly watched as if enjoying a play.

He was only an arm away.

Everyone thought that Shang Xingzhou would kill him, so why was he so calm?

Shang Xingzhou was quiet for a while, and then he asked, "You already knew I would do this?"

"I deeply understand Master. If the world believes Master is wrong, Master will definitely believe that the world, not you, is wrong."

Chen Changsheng said, "How can someone like Master, who is always correct, possibly admit that they have lost?"

Shang Xingzhou asked, "Then why did you arrange for today's fight?"

If Shang Xingzhou would not abide by the agreements he made before the fight no matter the result, what meaning was there in this fight?

If Chen Changsheng had calculated this beforehand, why had he

spent so much effort to force Shang Xingzhou to agree to his request, to have the situation develop to this state?

"Of course it has meaning, because it has helped Master clearly see who you are."

Chen Changsheng said to Shang Xingzhou, "Look, Master. Look at how ugly you are, how unpleasant to look at."

His eyes were clean and bright like mirrors, reflecting a face.

It was a rather elderly face, stained in blood, imbued with a pride and madness that came from self-hypnotism.

Shang Xingzhou looked at this face and found it very unfamiliar.

Chapter 1117 – [Everything Regarding Chen Shengsheng](#)

Shang Xingzhou knew that he was looking at his own face.

But he still felt it very unfamiliar.

Because it was very different from the face he normally saw in the mirror.

No one knew what sort of person Shang Xingzhou was. Probably only Yuren had a clearer picture.

Neither the Tang Old Master, Yin, nor Chen Changsheng had a very clear understanding.

To describe it in two words, they would be 'not close'.

Shang Xingzhou was not close to his own junior brother, not close to his old friends, and was not even close to his own disciples.

He was not close to the entire world, even though whether actively or passively, he wanted to bring this entire world forward.

Everyone said that Black Robe was the world's most mysterious individual, but in the last few centuries, Shang Xingzhou had been even more mysterious.

He had been even more patient than Black Robe, even more inconspicuous, or perhaps even more undemanding.

If he had wanted, he had every right to have his portrait hung up in the Lingyan Pavilion, and it would probably have been ranked very highly.

But he had chosen to remain in the darkness, glimpsing not the sun and speaking not with others.

In those centuries, he had played every sort of role, worn innumerable faces.

Perhaps it was for this reason that he would often look at a

mirror, as only this way could he confirm who he was on any given day.

Gradually, he had gotten used to speaking with the man in the mirror. Even when he no longer needed to play any other roles, he had kept this habit.

He had always kept the Clear Sky Mirror at his side until this year, when he had Xu Yourong bring it to White Emperor City, where it shattered in that battle.

No one else was more familiar with their own face than him, which is why he found it very unfamiliar now.

It was a rather haggard face, devoid of its usual handsomeness, making it seem rather old.

Most importantly, his eyes were not as calm as they used to be.

The air of a tyrant could be clearly seen between those raised brows and eyes of feigned indifference. It looked quite silly.

It was just like that youngest prince, shouting with a twisted expression in the Hundred Herb Garden.

In the end, he had still been shot to death by arrows.

Yes, when the Prince of Chu died, he had also had an ugly face, covered with blood.

Where did I go after that?

That's right, I went to the Imperial Palace, and passed on His Majesty's will to Emperor Taizu.

Taizu looked fat and stupid, but he was actually extremely bright, or else how did he see my killing intent?

His Majesty was truly too merciful. He should have killed Wang Zhice that night. Why leave him his life?

Without him, would it have been impossible to defeat the demons? I really can't make sense of it.

Chen Xuanba was such a great talent and the Prince of Chu was such a skilled strategist, and didn't His Majesty choose to reluctantly wipe them out in the end? Why spare a single scholar?

Shang Xingzhou's thoughts flitted back from the past, his gaze drawing back from the distance and falling back on Chen Changsheng's face.

Chen Changsheng's face was also stained with blood, but for some reason, it still seemed very clean.

And it was also very calm, with no traces of fear to be seen.

Shang Xingzhou was a little angry.

Chen Changsheng's words had made him feel very uncomfortable.

And he found Chen Changsheng's serenity impossible to accept.

He asked, "Are you really not afraid of death?"

Chen Changsheng said, "Master, you should know more than anyone else how afraid I am of death."

When he was ten, Shang Xingzhou had said those words to him, leaving him grief-stricken for a very long time.

He spent many nights hiding under his sheets and crying.

The one patting him on the back through the blanket while soothing him was Yuren.

But Shang Xingzhou was in the room a wall away, so how could he not know?

"But when you think about it for too long, are afraid of it for too long, you naturally grow numb."

Chen Changsheng added, "Now that I think about it, I truly do have to thank Master for the life you arranged for me."

Shang Xingzhou said, "At the time, you were sure that you would not live past the age of twenty, so you spent each day walking

toward death in order to live, naturally making it easy for you to overcome death. Now, however, you have defied the heavens and changed fate, and can roam freely across the world for a thousand years. You even have a high chance of seeing Grand Liberation. So why are you still not afraid?"

"I also don't know if I'm actually unafraid or if it's something else. It's probably only when one is truly facing death that one can truly understand what one feels."

Chen Changsheng said, "I will help Master clearly see yourself, and Master can help me clearly see myself."

'Hell is other people.'

Death was a bright mirror.

One could use it to tidy their clothes.

And one could use it to clearly see one's heart.

.....

.....

Time slowly passed.

The maple trees were still.

Shang Xingzhou had still not done the deed.

"Let go."

Wang Zhice spoke.

Since he was not willing to do the deed, he might as well let go.

'Let go' had two meanings here.

'Let go of the hand around Chen Changsheng's neck.'

'Let go of this world.'

Shang Xingzhou said nothing, did nothing.

"Does Sir think that letting go this way is not giving you enough face?"

Tang Thirty-Six suddenly smiled and then gave himself a hefty slap on his right cheek.

There was an extremely clear and resounding clap.

Tang Thirty-Six's right cheek began to swell.

He looked at Shang Xingzhou and very sincerely said, "Look sir, what does face matter?"

Shang Xingzhou still said nothing.

Some people believed that Tang Thirty-Six's actions were solely meant to disturb Shang Xingzhou's mind, essentially just mindless drivel.

Chen Changsheng did not think so, because he knew that this was the true problem.

As he had just said, a person like Shang Xingzhou who was always correct could never admit that he had lost.

This fact made him rather exhausted, perhaps even bored.

He said to Shang Xingzhou, "Why can't Master learn how to admit a loss?"

"I did not lose, so why must I admit that I have lost? Do not forget, for the last one thousand years, I have always been the winner."

Shang Xingzhou proudly said, "Even though I once underestimated Tianhai and committed an error, I still won in the end."

Chen Changsheng was quiet for a while, then he asked, "If you're not willing to admit to your loss, can you admit that you were wrong?"

All was quiet.

Everyone looked toward him.

"If Master insists on not admitting your loss, can you admit that

you were wrong?"

Chen Changsheng earnestly asked Shang Xingzhou.

Shang Xingzhou's expression seemed to freeze.

"Three years ago in the Orthodox Academy, it was snowing that night. At the time, I said to Master that between the two of us, you were the one that was wrong."

Chen Changsheng said, "Since you were wrong, why can't you admit that you were wrong?"

If they weren't speaking about victory and defeat, they could talk about right and wrong.

Just who was right and who was wrong.

Since he couldn't admit defeat, could he admit that he was wrong?

Shang Xingzhou said nothing.

Chen Changsheng asked him, "Master, is it so difficult for you to even admit that you were wrong?"

Shang Xingzhou quietly stared at him and slowly loosened his grip.

No one stepped forward, because the pair were still very close. They could touch each other just by stretching out a hand.

Chen Changsheng followed with a few more words.

"In the Mausoleum of Books, I said to Master that perhaps in the final moment, you would realize what you truly wanted. Just now was the final moment.

"Master asked why I wanted to arrange this fight. This is the answer. I wanted to invite Master to take a clear look at yourself. Perhaps it would be rather ugly, but it would be the truth.

"You don't want to kill me. You've never wanted to kill me, because you knew that you were wrong.

"Starting from twenty years ago, everything Master did regarding me was wrong."

Shengsheng, 生生, instead of Changsheng, 长生, is intentional on the author's part. Shengsheng means vitality/life while Changsheng means immortality/longevity.

Chapter 1118 – Let Everyone See

While the southern experts came north with the excuse of the Grand Examination and Xu Yourong was wielding the authority of the southern diplomatic mission, while storms gathered between the capital and Luoyang, and thunder began to boom across all levels of society, Chen Changsheng never once stated his opinion. He quietly sat in his stone room, comprehending the sword, until today. He had suddenly exploded with power, borrowing the momentum to force Shang Xingzhou to agree to a fight with him.

He could truly be said to have racked his brains for all this.

He naturally wanted to win this fight, but more important was the fight itself.

He wanted to use this fight to force Shang Xingzhou to the edge of the cliff, to the most extreme of situations.

He wanted Shang Xingzhou to vividly feel the danger of defeat, feel strange gazes, feel the irresolute future that came from all things turning to nothing.

Only this way could Shang Xingzhou clearly see himself, see how small he was beneath his blue Daoist robe, properly see the heart that he had never seen before.

Just what was Shang Xingzhou's heart thinking about? Just how did he regard everything related to Chen Changsheng?

Chen Changsheng's words were his view on Shang Xingzhou.

'You cannot admit that you are wrong, but you knew long ago that you were wrong. Thus, in the past few years, you never tried to do the deed yourself, only let the people from the Tianhai clan and the Great Western Continent come to kill me. You simply never wanted to kill me, even though you yourself were never clear on this fact.'

There was an unshakable reasoning to these words.

With Shang Xingzhou's cultivation level and his will as sturdy as an old pine, even with all the restrictions the Pope had left before his death, even with all of Chen Changsheng's helpers and extreme prudence, if he had truly wanted to kill Chen Changsheng, his efforts over the last few years would not have been so fruitless. Moreover, the White Tiger Divine General's attempt could even be called a joke.

This was the truth that Chen Changsheng had wanted to expose to Shang Xingzhou, his true heart.

Shang Xingzhou said nothing as he looked at Chen Changsheng, his eyes extremely cold.

He did not seem to be looking at a real person, an actual living being. Instead, in his eyes were weeds in a pot, a sour fruit.

Was what Chen Changsheng said true?

In those years in Xining Village's old temple, the one who had fed Chen Changsheng porridge and fish to let him grow had been Yuren, and the one to teach Chen Changsheng was still Yuren.

Shang Xingzhou had not been very close to Chen Changsheng, and rarely taught him.

Had it not been because he had not felt any sentiment toward Chen Changsheng, but because he was afraid that he would begin to feel sentimental?

In the last few years, the entire world knew that he did not like Chen Changsheng, but they did not know why.

It turned out the derision, contempt, and disdain had all been false. Had he only wanted to maintain distance so that he could harden his heart?

In the end, however, Chen Changsheng was still that shadow on his Dao heart.

How could he wipe away that shadow, how could he calm his

heart?

He could not kill Chen Changsheng, because what had happened had happened.

Perhaps he had to do as Chen Changsheng said.

Admit that he was wrong?

Several gazes examined Shang Xingzhou's face.

Shang Xingzhou looked at Chen Changsheng and smiled.

His smile contained unconcealed ridicule.

"You think too much."

After saying this, he turned and walked out of the Orthodox Academy.

His blue Daoist robe was completely stained in blood. It looked like an inky black lotus flower slowly swaying in the wind.

Chen Changsheng silently watched as his figure faded into the distance.

Even at the end, no one had admitted their loss, but everyone knew who had won.

He had defeated his master, the strongest person in the world.

He had not only won this match, but also the battle of minds between master and disciple.

No matter which angle one looked at it from, this was an extraordinary feat, the glory of kings.

Logically speaking, the ruins of the Maple Forest Pavilion, no, the entire Orthodox Academy should have brimming with a joyous air.

But there was none, because Chen Changsheng remained silent, his lips so tightly pursed that they were going white.

The closest one to him was Xu Yourong.

As she watched his silence, the joy in her eyes gradually faded

into a faint pity.

"I never thought that you were so skilled at speaking."

She smiled as she spoke, wanting to comfort him.

Chen Changsheng had said many words to Shang Xingzhou today. In his agitated state, his words had been rather sharp.

"That's because you speak too little with him, or else you would know that what he's best at is dissing people."

Tang Thirty-Six's eyebrows were soaring upward as he spoke. He showed no sign that he was making fun of Chen Changsheng, as his entire face seemed to indicate that he was proud to be in his company.

Soon after, he turned his head and said in impatience, "Do you need me to invite you?"

The target of his words didn't understand what he meant.

Tang Thirty-Six said, "The fight's already over, so what are you still poking around here for? You should quickly leave, and I certainly have no plans to invite you to a meal."

He was the Superintendent of the Orthodox Academy, so he naturally had the right to both welcome and drive out guests.

The problem was that he was speaking to Wang Zhice.

Not even Emperor Taizong or the Tianhai Divine Empress had ever used such an impatient tone with Wang Zhice.

And no one had ever claimed that Wang Zhice was poking around.

Shaking his head, Wang Zhice turned to leave the Orthodox Academy.

"Who are you displaying this graceful and elegant posture for? You still lost in the end!"

Tang Thirty-Six spat at the ground.

Wang Po walked up to Chen Changsheng and examined his face. After confirming that he was okay, he bid farewell.

From start to finish, there were no words exchanged, and certainly no thanks. All was conducted in indifference.

Whether it was in Xunyang City back then, last year in Wenshui City, or this year in the capital, it was all the same.

Chen Changsheng turned to Xu Yourong and said, "I won."

Xu Yourong gave him a look of praise. "Outstanding."

After a moment's pause, Chen Changsheng added, "I didn't cry."

Xu Yourong used a hand to wipe the dust from his face and said in a voice tinged with heartache, "This is also outstanding."

Chen Changsheng looked into the distance.

The academy wall there was in ruins.

The bright yellow imperial robe was striking in the overcast weather.

Yuren was standing there.

.....

.....

A deathly stillness had settled over Hundred Flowers Lane.

The final result had stunned the crowd.

No one left. One reason was that they were still too shocked, but another reason was that the gate of the Orthodox Academy was still closed.

The Emperor and Pope were talking inside.

With the fight over, no one could stop these martial brothers from meeting.

But one hour had already passed. Just what were they talking about?

The heavy gate of the Orthodox Academy slowly opened.
Chen Changsheng walked out.
A dagger was tied to his waist.
His hair was in somewhat of a mess.
His body was covered in dust and blood.
His eyes were a little red.
He looked very tired.
Even somewhat dejected.
But no one dared to believe this.
Xu Yourong walked on his left-hand side.
Tang Thirty-Six walked behind him.
Linghai Zhiwang solemnly bowed. "Paying respects to His Holiness the Pope."
The priests of the Li Palace began to kneel and bow.
The first sounds were sparse, but as more were added, they became neat and orderly.
More and more people kneeled on the ground.
There were Orthodoxy cavalry and also black-armored cavalry.
The ministers of the court also kneeled.
The ten-some princes silently stared at each other, but they also eventually chose to slowly kneel.
Chen Changsheng walked out of the lane.
The crowd gradually parted and kneeled.
It was like a tide.
Drowning out the capital.
And on to the rest of the continent.

Chapter 1119 – The Generation of Youths

Tang Thirty-Six did not leave with Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

He stood in front of the gate of the Orthodox Academy, watching as the dense crowd swiftly dispersed like a retreating tide.

Hundred Flowers Lane quickly regained its usual calm.

Su Moyu led the teachers and students back to the Orthodox Academy.

When they saw the ruins of the Maple Forest Pavilion, the toppled walls, the complete mess of the forest, and the clear evidence of the battle, the teachers and students imagined the heaven-shocking battle that had taken place not too long ago and couldn't help but be rather perturbed, feeling like all of it had just been a dream.

Of course, it was a good dream, because the Orthodox Academy currently belonged to the Li Palace's side.

Su Moyu paid no attention to the agitated moods of the teachers and students, nor was he in a rush to begin arranging repairs. He was more concerned with another matter.

"Is everything okay?"

He stared into Tang Thirty-Six's eyes and said, "I noticed that his eyes were really red."

He was naturally referring to Chen Changsheng here. Su Moyu was worried that his wounds might have been too heavy.

Tang Thirty-Six threw up his hands in speechlessness as he thought, how could I tell you that Chen Changsheng and His Majesty were crying on each other's shoulders?

.....

.....

In a quiet hall, water gurgled into a pool. A ladle aimlessly drifted on the surface like an unmanned ferry.

Wang Zhice took his gaze away from the pool and out of the hall.

The sun had not gone down yet, so he could clearly make out the surroundings in its light, but he did not see Daoist Wu.

A hint of white appeared between the heavens and earth, pure and holy, like both snow and a lotus. This was Xu Yourong.

She stood in front of the door to the Great Hall of Light, her head tilted as she peered inside, her appearance very cute.

Linghai Zhiwang and the others accompanied her, silent and prepared to fight.

Several years ago, a similar sight had taken place.

Chen Changsheng had just returned from Mount Han with a severely wounded body and was speaking with the Pope in that quiet hall.

At the time, Xu Yourong had been ready at any time to fight.

It was clear today that she was also prepared to fight at any moment.

Even if the one sitting across from Chen Changsheng today was Wang Zhice.

.....

.....

In the Orthodox Academy, when Chen Changsheng seemed about to fall to Shang Xingzhou's sword, Xu Yourong was compelled to move, but she was blocked by Wang Zhice.

But Wang Zhice had deeply admired her response at the time. If he was not mistaken, she had used the Divine Finger of the Worldstream.

"What I admire most is that she actually did not devote all her

time and energy to Big Brother's blade style. You are the same."

Wang Zhice spoke with heartfelt sincerity.

Because he was well aware of how terrifying the Halving Blade Style was.

It was not merely because he and Zhou Dufu were sworn brothers, a matter that the entire continent knew and had already been recorded in the history books.

Did Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong not know? Of course they knew.

In that year, while he and Wang Po were walking along the Luo River, he had displayed Zhou Dufu's blade intent. Wang Po had used this to break through and slay Tie Shu with a single slash of his blade.

The Halving Blade Style was currently in his and Xu Yourong's hands.

In possessing the Halving Blade Style, they could continue Zhou Dufu's legacy, possibly becoming the second supreme expert beneath the starry sky!

How could any normal cultivator resist this temptation?

They would undoubtedly spend every day diligently cultivating that blade style, spending all their time and life upon it.

But Chen Changsheng did not do this, nor did Xu Yourong. Other than when they studied it together in the Mausoleum of Books, they never again arranged to meet solely for the purpose of cultivating the Halving Blade Style. It was something they even often forgot.

"The Halving Blade Style is too fierce. It feels a little uncomfortable."

This was the explanation that Chen Changsheng gave to Wang Zhice.

He thought some more and added, "And besides, we have our own Dao, and it's also quite excellent."

The composure with which this answer had been delivered originated from self-confidence.

This was what Wang Zhice admired the most, and also what confused him the most.

From the Mausoleum of Books to the Sword Pool to the Garden of Zhou, all these lucky encounters had failed to effect any change on Chen Changsheng's mind.

Who could treat the Heavenly Tome Monoliths like stone pearls and casually wear them on their wrist?

He and Xu Yourong were so young, but where did their self-confidence come from that they could treat the world so calmly and leisurely?

"This world is ours, and it is also yours, but in the end, it will be yours."

Wang Zhice looked at him and said, "I originally believed that all of you were still young and could wait until we grew old, that there was no need for you to take such risks."

Chen Changsheng understood that he was explaining why he had accepted Shang Xingzhou's invitation to appear in the capital.

He didn't know what to say.

Because the person giving the explanation was called Wang Zhice.

This fact was truly liable to make one feel frustrated and helpless.

.....

.....

Xu Yourong turned around to peer at those black eaves deep amongst the palace halls.

Upon confirming that the conversation in the hall was proceeding very smoothly, she would naturally not break through the stone wall and ignite her Phoenix flames. Linghai Zhiwang and the others had also dispersed.

For her to hear Wang Zhice's words at this moment was naturally because Wang Zhice wanted her to hear them.

These words caused her brows to rise like flames prepared to burn the heavens.

A silhouette of a person was reflected in her eyes.

"It looks to me that your will to fight has still not completely vanished."

Mo Yu smiled at her. "After so many years, you still like to fight."

Other than her, Prince Chen Liu, and Ping, all of whom had grown up with her, very few people knew of Xu Yourong's real personality.

Xu Yourong looked at her and said, "I also see nothing but discontent in your eyes."

"For all the countless preparations you and I made to miss the mark, it's hard to not feel a little uncomfortable."

Mo Yu shrugged her shoulders as she said this, appearing to not care very much.

Such simple words concealed a storm of blood.

If not for Chen Changsheng's seemingly naive and silly plans, rivers of blood really might have flowed through the capital today.

"Your man really is quite good."

Mo Yu sighed, "It's a pity about Lord Wang."

Xu Yourong teased, "You still think that he's really like in the books?"

When she was still a child and Mo Yu was a teenaged girl, they

had obsessed many times over Wang Zhice while studying.

There were far too many young girls like this in the world. In their view, Lord Wang was assuredly someone that dwelled above the clouds, living off dew.

If they could really see him, they would learn that such an exiled celestial did not exist.

He was just an old man, rather lamentable, even uninteresting, who knew how to compromise.

While Mo Yu and Xu Yourong were talking about Wang Zhice...
Wang Zhice heard a sentence.

This sentence was a response to his explanation.

It was unyielding and straightforward.

"Since this world is destined to be ours, why do none of you retreat? Why must the young wait?

"If we wait too long, we will also become uninteresting elders like you.

"Then wouldn't that mean that the world will always be yours?"

It was not Chen Changsheng, and it was not Tang Thirty-Six.

The speaker was Linghai Zhiwang.

With a glance, Wang Zhice recognized that he was an archbishop.

A so-called Prefect of the Orthodoxy was not even worth his gaze.

But one matter did catch his gaze and became very difficult to ignore.

Linghai Zhiwang was very young.

Of the Prefects of the Orthodoxy, he was the youngest.

Tang Thirty-Six had said something like this before.

'To be young is to be correct.'

Wang Zhice pondered these words and said, "This is reasonable."

.....

.....

A carriage galloped out of the Li Palace.

The somewhat deformed wheels let out unpleasant sounds as they rolled against the hard stones of the plaza, and they looked incredibly shabby.

The bloodstains on the gray stones had been washed away long ago.

Daoist Wu's angry howls came out from the carriage.

"I'm going to kill all of you!

"You lot of bastards dared to treat this old man like this!"

No one responded to Daoist Wu's curses.

Not a single person, because the plaza had been cleared ages ago.

This was an expression of the Li Palace's respect.

Linghai Zhiwang stood under the eaves, watching the carriage gallop away with a calm expression.

An Hua stood beside him. As she thought about what she had done today and listened to those curses, her face paled, her expression rather helpless.

Daoist Wu's rage came from defeat, but also because he had not felt any respect while in the Li Palace.

According to common sense, no matter the outcome, an elder of his seniority should have received respect.

And he was representing Wang Zhice.

But there was none.

From Chen Changsheng to Xu Yourong, from Linghai Zhiwang to An Hua, from Wang Po to Mo Yu, none of them said anything.

Perhaps this represented the end of a generation.

That generation.

Daoist Wu was extremely angry, but he was even more disappointed. Wang Zhice, on the other hand, was very calm, even relieved.

Because he had sensed a certain energy today.

It had once been a very familiar energy, but after the founding of the Great Zhou, it gradually began to fade into the distance.

It was a somewhat crude energy that easily made one feel unhappy. It had no laws, but it did have an extremely lively vigor that was extremely moving.

A thousand years ago, the world was in chaos, the government in shambles, the demons invading from the north. The people had no means to live while the roads were paved with white bones.

And then, the wildflowers bloomed.

Zhou Dufu, Chen Xuanba, Chen Jiexing, Shang Xingzhou, the Prince of Chu, Ding Zhongshan, Li Mi'er, Qin Zhong, Yu Gong, and the other people in the Lingyan Pavilion.

And there was also him.

They had all been very young back then, but who had they respected? Who had they feared?

It turned out that that generation had never ended.

It was still that generation now.

The generation of youths.

Chapter 1120 – The Most Authentic Clan of Sovereigns

Wang Zhice left the capital, and no one knew when he would next emerge from Sangharama Temple.

Shang Xingzhou had also returned to Luoyang, and it would be many years before he left the Monastery of Eternal Spring again.

Before leaving, he went to the Imperial Palace and had a conversation with Yuren.

The first words Yuren gestured to him were: "When the Holy Maiden entered the palace that night, I promised her nothing."

On that night, Prince Chen Liu made an overnight journey to Luoyang.

Shang Xingzhou's silence had persisted from then until today.

From a certain perspective, he had fallen into Xu Yourong's trap.

Xu Yourong had used her momentum to strike at his heart.

Yuren's meaning was loud and clear: 'If Master truly did doubt me, you could have come and asked me beforehand.'

Shang Xingzhou had not asked. He had given a reason for this to Xu Yourong in the Mausoleum of Books: No letter from the Imperial Palace had come to Luoyang.

The many days that had passed were enough to write a very sincere letter, but Yuren had not sent even half a word.

Yuren gestured, "If Emperor Taizong were still alive, what would he do? Would he take the initiative to write a letter?"

From Xining Village's old temple, perhaps from even earlier, Shang Xingzhou had begun teaching Yuren how to be an outstanding sovereign.

In Shang Xingzhou's view, and also the entire continent's, the

most outstanding sovereign in all of history was naturally Emperor Taizong.

He hoped that Yuren could become the second Emperor Taizong, so he naturally had to study and imitate him in every matter, every day.

When confronting the most complicated and difficult of choices, Yuren would frequently think about what Emperor Taizong would do.

The answer was obvious.

Emperor Taizong would have never taken the initiative to write a letter to Luoyang.

"You did well."

Shang Xingzhou looked at Yuren with an expression of great gratification.

"But you still did not do enough. Emperor Taizong would have been blaming himself even more right now. He might have issued a decree criticizing himself by now."

The snowstorm had stopped long ago and spring returned to the earth. The plazas of the Imperial Palace were drenched by the thawing snow, and from the distance, one could see green buds growing from the chinks in the stone.

Yuren watched as that figure retreated into the twilight. As he thought about their conversation, he said to himself, I am still far inferior to Grandfather.

There were probably many areas in which he was inferior to his grandfather, like in hypocrisy.

For instance, he had not been able to resolve the problem between Shang Xingzhou and Chen Changsheng.

Moreover, his master was still old.

Yuren thought about the greying hairs on Shang Xingzhou's

temples and became rather dejected.

Eunuch Lin took a sideways glance at the emperor's face and suddenly felt rather sad.

It had been many years since he had first entered the palace in Emperor Xian's era, and he was already very old and had seen many things, but he was finding it harder and harder to understand the thinking of the younger generation.

Whether it was the young Emperor or the young Pope.

They all respected elders like Wang Zhice and Shang Xingzhou.

But they also needed to surpass them, to completely defeat them.

But why?

.....

.....

Today, Mount Mo had collapsed.

This made Mount Ji the highest peak in the capital's vicinity.

The Prince of Zhongshan squinted at the distant sunset, his gaze sharp.

The moment he learned of the result in the Orthodox Academy, he had left Hundred Flowers Lane.

He did not want to kneel to Chen Changsheng, and he did not want to remain in the capital.

Shang Xingzhou had admitted to his defeat, so one could presume that the princes of the Chen clan would find their lives harder and harder.

He had decided to return to the county conferred to him, and he was just waiting for an imperial decree now.

If he left without a decree, the Imperial Court could charge him as a traitor at any time, and he did not wish to offer up a reason on a silver platter.

The Prince of Xiang walked to the summit. Gazing at the mountains bathed in twilight, he sighed.

He was also waiting for an imperial decree, but the contents of this decree would be different from the Prince of Zhongshan's.

The Prince of Zhongshan asked, "Were you surprised to see the venerable Daoist lose?"

"I followed the venerable Daoist for ten-some years, so I truly didn't think it was possible."

The Prince of Xiang's hands held up his belt as he caught his breath. He then continued, "But whether it was a win or loss, it was still a matter between a master and his two disciples."

These words seemed to contain a deeper meaning.

The Prince of Zhongshan sneered, "A temple of Xining rules the world. The White Emperor was right."

The Prince of Xiang sorrowfully said, "The world, huh... I'm also not sure just which family this world belongs to."

The Prince of Zhongshan glanced at him and said, "Are you still not willing to admit that he's our younger brother?"

The Prince of Xiang said nothing, but his fingers plunged into his portly flesh.

The Prince of Zhongshan slightly frowned and asked, "Just because it was that woman that gave birth to him?"

The Prince of Xiang rebuked, "That's Imperial Mother."

The Prince of Zhongshan angrily said, "A hypocrite through and through! How boring. In this aspect, you really did learn a great deal from Grandfather!"

The Prince of Xiang bitterly smiled. "It's a pity that Imperial Father did not think this way."

The Prince of Zhongshan jeered, "That's because Imperial Father

didn't like Grandfather."

At this moment, the imperial decree finally arrived.

The Prince of Zhongshan had received the decree he wanted.

It was clear that the emperor also did not want him to remain in the capital where he would curse his mother every day.

The Prince of Xiang did not receive the decree that he wanted.

The emperor had ordered that Prince Chen Liu remain in the capital, of course under some nominal reason.

The Prince of Zhongshan patted the Prince of Xiang on the shoulder and left.

The Prince of Xiang stood in the sunset. After quietly thinking for a while, he began to walk down the mountain.

By the time he returned to the relay station, everyone else had already heard the news.

The princess had almost lost consciousness from crying while his other sons and daughters had faces covered in tears, though the occasional glint of happiness could be spotted in their eyes.

"I didn't give him a good name back then. [The word 'Liu' wasn't auspicious.](#)"

The Prince of Xiang seated himself in a palace armchair and looked at his children in the room. "He's spent the majority of his life in the capital as a hostage, contributing a great deal to our clan. I'm not saying that you should be grateful, but can I trouble you to be a little sincerer when you act out your sorrow?"

Upon hearing these words, they all looked at each other in dismay. Perhaps because they were embarrassed or nervous, someone really did begin to cry, which quickly became a string of unbroken laments.

The Prince of Xiang seemed rather annoyed at this noise. Holding his belt, he walked into the rear courtyard of the relay station.

With the support of the maids, he got onto his princely carriage.

A thick blanket had been laid out in the carriage, holding delicious fruits and beautiful women.

A very fat man was surrounded by fine foods and fine women.

A perceptive observer would realize that this man was very similar to the Prince of Xiang, or even exactly the same.

The Prince of Xiang walked up to the man and sighed. "I'm saying that you should also act a bit more authentically. After all, I am an expert of the Divine Domain, so you should have a little bearing, right?"

The man said with a bitter expression, "Your Highness, if I could reach your level, would I still need to be a substitute?"

The Prince of Xiang helplessly said, "What about bearing then?"

The man sternly said, "Your Highness is just this sort of kind and amiable person!"

.....

.....

North of the Cong Province Army headquarters and west of the Starfall Mountains was a grassland.

This grassland was the ancestral home of the Elf race, but the wars between the demons, demi-humans, and humans meant that it had long been abandoned. However, it had now become a paradise for monsters.

Monsters that were rarely spotted elsewhere in the continent could all be found here. Of course, this also meant danger and chaos.

Several years ago, however, a freak and an Earth Monkey arrived at this place.

This freak quickly became the sovereign of this grassland.

And then, another person came.

The 'Liu' of Prince Chen Liu, 留, means 'stay/remain'.

Chapter 1121 – So It Was You

The freak was Chusu.

In White Emperor City, he had been forced to retreat again and again by Xu Yourong and was simply no match for her, but that was because she was his natural bane. In truth, in the world of experts beneath the Divine Domain, he had the ability to threaten any expert, whether it was Chen Changsheng or Qiushan Jun.

This grassland abandoned by man did not have too many old and powerful monsters, and even if there were monster herds that were hard to deal with, the Earth Monkey's help had allowed him to easily subdue them. Several years had passed, and he had quickly become the sovereign of this grassland.

Perhaps because the previous sect master's soul's influence on him was getting weaker and weaker or perhaps because he enjoyed the life of a sovereign, Chusu never left the grassland again, and he put aside any thoughts of carrying out revenge against Su Li's descendants.

Sometimes, late in the night, he would sit at the highest point of the grasslands and look south for a very long time.

It was not because he was missing that life, as he had no love for those dark and humid quarters beneath the Longevity Sect. He was battling with his instinctive desires.

When he was created, his soul had been implanted with a nigh-inextinguishable desire to kill and a hatred for anyone related to the name of Su Li that was engraved into his bones. If he could not vent this desire and hatred through brutal actions, he was highly likely to suffer backlash from the Yellow Springs art.

But too many Elves had died on this grassland, drenching the soil in blood, so few people ever visited.

He simply had no one to kill, so he could only learn how to

patiently endure, learn how to fight with this instinctive desire.

On a certain night, as he sat at the highest point of the grasslands, he suddenly sensed something and raised his head to the sky.

One star of the countless in the night sky was exceptionally bright, several hundred times brighter than it normally was.

Chusu's face paled so much that not even his black fur could hide it.

It was hard to say if it whitened because of the starlight or for some other reason.

"How is this possible?"

As he looked at that dazzling star, Chusu became extremely agitated.

"Another person has entered the Divine Domain! Why isn't that person me!"

He angrily howled, his two hands striking the ground, sending grass and dirt into the air.

"No! Absolutely not!"

Chusu's unpleasantly hoarse voice echoed through the grassland, letting the world feel his reluctance and loathing.

Suddenly, he stopped shouting, his nose twitching like he was a dog that had smelled something in the wind.

With a rustling sound, the Earth Monkey appeared on the meadow. It crawled forward with its forelegs to Chusu's side.

Chusu was a hunchback with a short figure. He was dressed in a shabby black robe that stank of decay.

The more beautiful the starry sky was, the uglier Chusu was, especially when he excitedly waved his hands in the starlight.

His hands were covered in scales and sprouted black fur, while

their sharp claws were packed with dirt and blood and flesh that had been rotting there for several years.

Anything, even a monster, would feel fear or revulsion upon seeing such a freak.

The Earth Monkey did not. It looked at Chusu with eyes filled with confusion, trust, and adoration.

"There's treasure."

While looking at a certain point in the darkness, Chusu spoke in a low and raspy voice.

That brightest star in the night sky symbolized an expert entering the Divine Domain. Just like when Wang Po broke through in the Luo River, all things in the world responded, especially those laws and existences that dwelled above the Divine Domain.

Chusu could clearly sense a ripple of divine Qi.

He could sense it so clearly because that divine Qi was in this grassland, just nearby.

The origin of this divine Qi was probably in heavy sleep or in a very weak state.

To avaricious cultivators, this was a temptation that was impossible to refuse, and Chusu was even a practitioner of the Yellow Springs art.

He instantly merged into the ground and moved toward that place in the darkness.

The Earth Monkey looked around and let out a low whimper of warning. It then stood up and pissed on the ground, after which it burrowed into the earth and followed Chusu.

.....

.....

Several dozen li away stood a mountain of rock. It looked rather normal on the outside, but the rock within was red.

Deep within a cave in this mountain, the walls were covered in ancient and simple murals drawn with sap. Though the light was dim, one could vaguely make out a stone platform inside.

A nest of branches and soft grasses had been constructed on the stone platform, and a small, gray bird lay inside.

This cave network extended for several li and was extremely complex, with all sorts of forking paths. Even the most formidable of monsters would find it impossible to reach the end.

Logically speaking, this gray bird should have been very safe.

Yet the most complicated of tunnels could not keep out species that could travel through the earth.

Chusu's body trembled incessantly as he looked at that unremarkable gray bird, the stench rising from his tattered black robe growing thicker and thicker.

He did not fear beings of the Divine Domain, nor was he disappointed because he had found the wrong target. He was excited.

He felt that his rough fate had finally come to an end.

The word 'luck' had finally anointed his head.

The Earth Monkey followed the trail Chusu had left in the earth, and when it drilled out of the ground, this was the sight that greeted its eyes.

When its gaze fell on that small, gray bird, it went cross-eyed.

To put it another way, this extremely experienced and most shameless and insidious of monsters had been blindsided.

The Earth Monkey recognized the gray bird.

Even though it had changed shape, even if it had become dust,

the Earth Monkey would not dare to forget.

That bird was the Golden-winged Great Peng.

In the Plains of the Unsetting Sun, countless monsters had esteemed it.

Like Dragons and Phoenixes, the Golden-winged Great Peng was an innately divine being.

Chusu was well aware that eating a Golden-winged Great Peng would bring him many benefits.

It was obvious that this Golden-winged Great Peng was in the extremely long process of awakening, leaving it incapable of defending itself.

Chusu could not pass on this opportunity.

The Earth Monkey was well aware of this, so no matter how cunning and sinister it was, it could not think of a way to stop Chusu.

At this moment, the gray bird opened its eyes.

With just a glance, it knew what this freak stinking of decay wanted to do.

The young Peng showed no fear or pleas for mercy in its eyes, only cold indifference.

An indescribably terrifying pressure filled the cave.

"Do you think that you can scare me?"

Chusu's voice was still very hoarse and unpleasant.

The young Peng's eyes burned with rage.

But just like Chusu thought, it was at a crucial moment of its soul's awakening, so it could not move.

A ruthless hiss that seemed to express grief at being wronged echoed through the cave.

"You are the same as me: a proud, cold, and malicious species that has never liked this world. We have no masters and no friends, so there will naturally be no one willing to save us. This being the case, why not merge into one and try to compete against the world again?"

Chusu very seriously spoke to the young Peng.

The young Peng rolled its eyes as if Chusu was an idiot.

A streak of fire suddenly appeared in the night sky.

The line of fire plunged straight into the rock of the mountain.

The ground quaked as blazing magma surged with indescribable heat.

The mountain collapsed into a plume of dust.

Chusu sensed a familiar Qi. As he recalled his wounds from several years ago, he turned abnormally pale.

A delicate figure walked out of the dust, her wings slowly retracting behind her, then vanishing.

The young Peng shouted at that figure like it had been greatly wronged, and also like a child that was whining.

Xu Yourong petted it.

The young Peng seemed very comforted. After softly whining a little, it closed its eyes and continued to sleep.

"So it was you..."

At this sight, Chusu cried out in anguish, "Is it the law of the heavens that everything good belongs to you?"

Xu Yourong thought this over and replied, "It seems that it is a little unfair."

Chusu sensed her Qi and suddenly laughed.

His laugh was very unpleasant, his smile even more so.

"So it wasn't you."

Chapter 1122 – Everything Is Fake

'So it was you' was a sentence that was easy to understand. However, the following sentence, 'So it wasn't you', seemed rather more inexplicable, the connection between the two hard to decipher.

Any other person would probably be baffled and think Chusu was insane, but Xu Yourong understood what he meant. She faintly smiled, saying nothing.

The smile on Chusu's face also faded as he earnestly said to her, "We truly do share a rather deep fate."

His stench began to spread over the shattered mountain, as unpleasant as his raspy voice, making one want to vomit.

Chusu was the freak of the Longevity Sect while Xu Yourong was the Holy Maiden of South Stream Temple.

The Longevity Sect and South Stream Temple were closely connected. If one truly wanted to talk about fate and Dao, it would be a very long story.

Xu Yourong was not in the mood to listen to a story and Chusu did not have the time.

The ground slightly shook as scattered red rocks bounced on the grassland.

A dense collection of red lights appeared on the edge of the grassland, appearing like a sprinkling of blood.

These were the red eyes of monsters.

Several hundred monsters had surrounded the mountain under the cover of darkness.

"I can't beat you."

Chusu shrilly said to Xu Yourong, "But now I have many subordinates. Are you afraid?"

Just like he had said to the Golden-winged Great Peng, he had no teacher, relatives, fellow disciples, friends, or even a master.

He was the sole member of his species, and he was also malicious.

When he came to this grassland, he suddenly had many loyal subordinates. He was very unfamiliar with this feeling, but he enjoyed it.

He felt like he was the sovereign of this grassland, that an army would march with the wave of his hand.

He wanted to show off to Xu Yourong.

The Earth Monkey crawled to his side, its head lowered and its body trembling, seemingly out of fear.

Chusu felt very proud.

Xu Yourong calmly gazed at him in pity.

Chusu was very angry.

But he was not in time to order the monsters to attack.

The cry of a crane rose up from far off in the night sky.

The monsters raised their heads, so overcome with fear that they seemed to turn into statues.

The Golden-winged Great Peng opened its eyes to glance at the night sky. Upon sensing that familiar Qi, it turned its head to look over in absolute contempt.

She's not even married yet, yet you let him ride you every day. Have you no shame?

.....

.....

In the drifting breeze, the White Crane landed amongst the debris.

A light blue robe, tightly bound black hair, and a simple ebony

hairtie to hold it together.

Several years had passed, but not much had changed. Chen Changsheng was still dressed very simply and it was hard to associate him with the image of a Pope.

Chen Changsheng's appearance caused the entire world to fall silent.

The monsters fearfully and carefully began to retreat, not even daring to rustle the grass.

Perhaps it was because his Daoist robe was covered in the scent of a Black Frost Dragon, but also perhaps because some ancient monsters seemed to be paying him respect.

The fundamental reason for their silence was Chusu's silence.

He had been staring at Chen Changsheng's face the entire time. After staring for a very long time, he suddenly shouted, "It's also not you!"

Chen Changsheng replied, "Yes, it's not me."

Upon receiving confirmation, Chusu was in a fine mood and found it hard to suppress his laughter.

"HAHAHAHA!

"It really isn't you!

"I was just saying that it couldn't possibly be you!"

He pointed at Chen Changsheng's face and laughed, tears streaming from his cheeks.

Chusu was so agitated that he had lost control of himself, because his mood right now was very complicated.

He had noticed how Chen Changsheng had changed over these last few years.

Star radiance was flickering in each one of his one hundred and eight Qi openings, while sword intent seemed to hover between

existence and nonexistence beneath his blue robe.

What did this mean?

This meant that he was only half a step from the Divine Domain.

Was there anyone in history that was as young as Chen Changsheng and yet so close to the Divine Domain?

Chen Xuanba?

Yes, that person was not Chen Changsheng.

But the current Chen Changsheng was already someone he could not defeat.

Chusu decided to flee.

He laughed so outrageously so that he could conceal his true intentions.

The laughter suddenly stopped as his gray wings of flesh burst through the air, his stench exploding outward in the breeze.

Chusu fled underground.

If Xu Yourong's reaction was a little slow, she would not be able to catch up to him, not even if she ignited her Phoenix flames.

This was borne out in reality.

Chusu vanished.

Xu Yourong did not pursue.

In the darkness, the shattered mountain and grassland were equally pitch-black.

A very faint strand of spiritual sense floated in the wind.

This spiritual sense had been left behind intentionally by Chusu for the Earth Monkey.

He had spent the last few years living together with the Earth Monkey and had already gotten used to its existence. He had raised it like a dog, so even at the most dangerous of moments, he did not

want to throw it away.

Suddenly, the ground several li away bulged up several zhang.

Under the starlight, the green blanket of grass was torn up and black dirt was sent flying.

Whoosh.

A figure was spit out of the earth like a stone, flying several dozen zhang into the sky.

After a moment, that person crashed to the ground and groaned.

Based on the voice, it was Chusu.

Just what had happened?

Chusu was very perplexed.

Shock and fear mixing in his mind, he lowered his head and noticed that something had bitten off half of the sole of his left foot.

He then felt a chill and pain from behind him. Moving his spiritual sense, he noticed that the old wounds on his wings of flesh from his battle with Xu Yourong had been torn open again!

Fear would intensify one's pain. Chusu felt like the pain from these two places was making his head go numb. Unable to control himself, he screamed.

"Who! Who ambushed me!"

A rustling noise echoed over the grassland.

It was not wind blowing through the grass, or dragon serpents digging into the ground. It was the sound of fur chafing against the grass.

The Earth Monkey used its forelegs to crawl to the base of the pile of earth and began to spit.

Pah! Pah! Pah! Pah!

The Earth Monkey's spit contained both blood and flesh.

"It was you?"

Chusu was struck dumb by this sight. The Earth Monkey's thin figure seemed to become that of a devil.

He did not understand why it would betray him after having coexisted for so long. Even if his temper was normally rather poor, was there any need to demand his death?

The Earth Monkey turned to glance at Chusu.

Chusu felt like he was seeing a terrifying smile in this monster's eyes.

At this moment, Chen Changsheng finally spoke. "Enough."

The Earth Monkey stood and ran back to Chen Changsheng, after which it turned to glance at Chusu once more.

Only now did Chusu realize that the Earth Monkey was no cripple. It could stand up straight and walk!

He had known that he had been raising a fake dog, but it was only today that he realized that everything had been fake.

The mental pain from being played with and tricked was even greater than the pain from his wounds.

"It was all your doing?"

He furiously howled at Chen Changsheng, "I'm going to kill you!"

As the wind intensified and a stench rose to the heavens, the grass was dyed black while red stones rustled down from the mountain.

The tattered black garment flapped in the wind.

Awe-inspiring sword intent suddenly appeared and sliced apart the starlight.

Several streams of blood shot through the air.

Chapter 1123 – If You Were Chusu

The starlight was magnificent tonight. After being sliced apart by the sword intent and scattered over the area, it only made the grassland brighter. It was like daytime had come early, starkly illuminating everything.

The blood was black, and as it splashed it against the grass, it hissed and let out a pungent smoke. The green grass quickly turned black.

Amidst fierce howls and violent winds, a monstrous Qi disturbed the world.

Dirt shot up into the air like a waterfall in reverse before swiftly being crushed down by those awe-inspiring sword intents.

After some time, everything finally fell quiet.

Chusu remained at his original position, his head lowered.

He had been born short and with a hunchback, so with his head lowered, he seemed rather meek and pitiful.

His black robe had become even more tattered, its surface covered in blood and dust. Two massive tears had been torn through its front.

Those were tears left by swords as they had pierced through his scales and fur, cleaving apart his bones and muscles and letting his blood flow freely.

The gray wings of flesh weakly flapped twice, sprinkling black blood, his old wounds now completely torn open.

His severed arm stuck out from the grass while his fake arm had already been rendered into dust by sword Qi.

With the place he was standing as the center, a circle of twenty zhang around him was covered in poisonous blood.

The monsters had been caught up in this assault, but not many

had died. The vast majority of the monsters had been led far away by the Earth Monkey.

There were no swords in that starlit sky, as all the swords had already returned to their sheath.

The sheath was tied to a belt.

Chen Changsheng said nothing, only looked at him.

"All of it was fake."

Chusu raised his head and spoke in his raspy voice, "The invincibility was fake, the legacy was fake, and defying the heavens and obtaining the Dao was also fake. Even relying upon each other for survival was fake. I only wanted to live, but there was no meaning in my existence, so even living was fake. I was born just to be a tool to kill people."

He was not looking at the Earth Monkey as he said this, but at the south.

The Longevity Sect was to the south.

There was silence for a while, then Chen Changsheng said, "I was also born as a tool, but I think that since we exist, there's naturally a meaning to it."

From a certain perspective, he and Chusu had very similar backgrounds.

Chusu shook his head. "That's because you met a few people who could grant meaning to your existence."

Chen Changsheng thought this over, then he said, "You're right."

Chusu said, "So you are luckier than me, and more blessed than me."

Chen Changsheng replied, "Yes, but this cannot become a reason."

What reason? Of course, a reason to do evil.

A tragic life experience could be a fortune for the mind, but it could not be a debt that could be randomly transferred to others.

The bitter encounters of one's childhood could engender much sympathy, but if one grew up to become a murderous and mad devil, that was still one's own responsibility to bear.

Chusu had not committed any monstrously evil deeds over the last few years in the grassland, but his hands had still bathed in no small amount of blood.

Chusu understood what he meant and knew that it would be difficult to escape this disaster. He began to softly laugh.

"If you were me, would you become Chusu or Chen Changsheng?"

These were his last words for the world.

His body crumbled into ten-some pieces, dropping to the ground like a pile of blocks.

Black blood splashed everywhere, a pungent and insidious Qi spreading everywhere.

Xu Yourong stretched out her hand, igniting a flame.

This flame was suffused with holy golden luster. It blazed on the earth, even traveling underground through the cracks.

The black blood transformed into smoke upon meeting the flames, crackling and hissing.

As the pungent and insidious Qi was gradually purified, it sounded like some ghost was wailing, its howls filled with both extreme loathing and fear.

As the golden flames gradually dissipated, Chen Changsheng said, "Perhaps this is a sort of release to him."

"If one is dissatisfied on the verge of death, how can the soul rest easy?"

Xu Yourong raised her right hand and pointed at him.

There was a very small wound at his neck, and several tiny black crystals in the wound.

Even with his cultivation level and Xu Yourong at his side, completely killing a freak like Chusu still required paying a price, taking certain risks.

A faint light, bursting with divine aura, emerged from Xu Yourong's palm and fell onto Chen Changsheng's neck.

The black crystals melted away like snowflakes before the blazing sun. At the same time, the wound quickly closed up.

Xu Yourong cautioned, "Logically speaking, there's no need for you to fear the corrosion of the Yellow Springs art, but it's best for you to be careful."

Chen Changsheng replied, "Thank you."

Xu Yourong said, "May the Sacred Light be with you."

Chen Changsheng sincerely said, "Then I want you to always remain at my side."

He was making a romantic remark, even though he wasn't that good at saying them. He spoke too seriously, so it made him look rather silly, but this made his actions only more touching.

Yet Xu Yourong had no reaction. She seemed cold and indifferent.

Chen Changsheng didn't understand why and wanted to ask, but he was interrupted.

At some point, the Earth Monkey had come before him. It was now kneeling and kissing the ground at his feet, appearing extremely respectful and fervent.

Chen Changsheng suddenly understood a principle.

Although the Earth Monkey was a monster most renowned for its

cunning and insidiousness, it was much easier to tell what it was thinking than it was to tell what a woman was thinking.

"I stopped you from doing anything just now not because I didn't trust you, and not because I had any objections about you."

Chen Changsheng glanced at Xu Yourong and then continued, "I also wasn't sympathizing with him. I just didn't think it was necessary."

He had never much liked Hu Thirty-Two's plan.

Chusu truly had a reason to die, but did he have to die to a betrayal?

He was talking to the Earth Monkey, but he was also explaining to Xu Yourong.

He was not sure if Xu Yourong's cold indifference had anything to do with this matter.

As the flames on the ground gradually extinguished, the flames in the ground intensified. Fiery light burst out from the cracks, appearing like solidified lightning, imbued with a terrifying beauty.

Xu Yourong's gaze flitted past the flames and into the distance. She asked, "You're sure that he'll come through here?"

Chen Changsheng said, "Before he left Blue Pass back then, he met with Chen Chou. The sign they agreed on is the same as this time."

Chen Chou was the Divine General of the Mount Song Army headquarters forcefully promoted by the Orthodoxy, so the meaning in that person meeting with him was crystal-clear.

Xu Yourong asked, "That person has such a terrible temper, so why does he trust you so much?"

Chen Changsheng explained, "In that year when you were in seclusion, I met with him once."

Xu Yourong knew of this matter, but she had not expected it to have such a massive influence on that person.

The wind stirred as the White Crane landed at her side.

She mounted the crane and closed her eyes to rest.

A few days ago, she had left Holy Maiden Peak after receiving some news, and tonight, she had hurried over after receiving the message from the Golden-winged Great Peng's spiritual sense. She was already deeply exhausted.

Chen Changsheng had come from even further, so he was even more tired, but he could not sleep.

He gazed at those desolate stone mountains in the distance, silently waiting.

On the other side of those mountains was the world of the demons.

Who would return from there tonight?

Chapter 1124 – The Eight Great Mountain Men

The starlight tonight truly was very bright. The distant undulating mountains looked just like white steamed buns.

No, those mountains were somewhat short, so they were more like the white flourcakes made by Miss Song in Xining Village.

Chen Changsheng felt a little hungry, and then he realized that in his hurry to sleep, it had already been one day and one night since he had eaten anything.

Why was it so bright? It was naturally because of that star.

That star was in the process of dimming, but it was still many times brighter than it usually was.

It signified that a cultivator had broken into the Divine Domain.

Chusu had been furious at this fact, and only when he realized that this person was not Xu Yourong or Chen Changsheng had he become a little happier.

Just who was this person?

Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong did not mention that person's name, but it was obvious that they knew who he was.

As he looked up at that brightest star in the night sky, Chen Changsheng was both a little confused and uneasy.

Given that person's personality, they wouldn't ask for help even if they were about to die, and now that they had successfully broken through, who could they be afraid of?

He had been riding a boat on the Red River that day.

While he listened to the low croons of the Jings in the water, Luoluo used her small hands to feed him little red fruits. It had truly been a blessed life.

And then, the White Crane came with information.

The information had come from the Bear tribe, originating from one of their spies and passed to a medicine merchant. The medicine merchant had gone to the Mount Song Army headquarters and personally delivered it to Chen Chou.

This information was a date and a carelessly drawn line, lacking any rhyme or reason.

Chen Changsheng took a small piece of paper from his bosom. As he looked at that thin line on the paper, he laid it over a map in his sea of consciousness.

If that information was right, that person would appear here tonight.

Under the starlight, the grassland was very peaceful.

The Earth Monkey took note of Chen Changsheng's mood and quietly lay in front of him, not making a single noise.

The monsters had retreated some distance, but none of them dared to leave. They nervously looked at the Earth Monkey, prepared to receive its orders at any time.

It appeared that the true master of the grassland had not been Chusu, but the Earth Monkey.

As it looked at that bright star, the Earth Monkey squinted its eyes in confusion.

Although it was crafty and sinister, it was still not an intelligent being and did not know how to cultivate. It naturally could not comprehend such phenomena.

Suddenly, the Earth Monkey straightened its body and looked at the distant stone mountain, wariness and unease appearing in its eyes.

Almost immediately after, it scrambled behind Chen Changsheng, poking out its head and growling at the darkness.

Xu Yourong rose and looked over. "They're here."

The White Crane flapped its wings, flying high into the sky to receive the guest.

The wind suddenly intensified, and the grass bowed toward the south.

The surroundings were flat and devoid of trees, but a flapping sound was coming from somewhere.

It was the sound of wind blowing against a kite.

A massive kite drifted over from the northern regions of the bright starry sky.

A string was tied to the bottom of the kite, the other end apparently tied to a person.

The kite flew over the white-colored mountains and arrived in that grassland bathed in starlight.

With a snap, the string broke.

The kite drifted upward, gradually disappearing. It was like it had ascended to the starry skies, leaving behind no evidence of its existence.

The ground trembled.

That person landed in front of Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

His face was covered in a sheet of white paper.

It turned out that the flapping sound had not been the wind against the kite, but wind blowing against this white paper.

Several holes had been punched in this white paper, their black abysses terrifying to behold. This was especially so today, as the paper was speckled with blood, making it seem even more savage.

He held a spear very casually in his hands. It was like he was carrying a bag, or a person.

But this spear was very straight, as straight as the person himself.

His body stood so straight that it seemed like it would never fall over.

Xiao Zhang, once ranked at the top of the Proclamation of Liberation, was the famed madman of the middle generation, a lunatic.

Many years ago, he had been pursued by the entire Great Zhou Imperial Court. After several years of vicious battle, he was finally forced into the snowy plains, after which nothing else was heard of him.

No one expected that when he next appeared, he would have already broken through, becoming an expert of the Divine Domain.

The starlight fell on Xiao Zhang's face, and when it reflected off the white paper, one could faintly see crystals glimmering within.

Chen Changsheng sensed his Qi and confirmed, much to his delight, that he was the one who had broken through.

But before he had time to say anything, Xiao Zhang extended a hand to stop him.

"I'm tired and need to rest for a while."

Upon saying this, Xiao Zhang fell backward.

Even at this time, he still maintained his straight posture, smashing into the ground like a pillar.

Grass and mud flew into the air.

Chen Changsheng was at a loss.

This mood and this scene made him recall many memories from Su Li's escape from the south many years ago.

After a moment, he came to his senses. Taking needles that were wrapped around his fingers, he stuck them into Xiao Zhang's neck

and began to treat him.

The Sacred Light technique was less effective on experts of the Divine Domain. Xu Yourong stood on the side and watched, her eyebrows arched in thought.

It was evident that Xiao Zhang had suffered severe injuries and had probably been pursued.

Whether he had been injured before entering the Divine or after, these wounds were all proof that those pursuing possessed incredible strength.

Logically speaking, the best choice right now was to take Xiao Zhang and leave. Even the strongest opponent would find it a challenging proposition to catch up to Xu Yourong and the White Crane.

But Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong did not do this, perhaps because Xiao Zhang's injuries were too severe, or perhaps because they noticed the changes in the darkness.

The starlight gradually dimmed as the darkness deepened. Gloomy and cold, it seemed to have weight.

The darkness gradually collected at a certain place, layering over itself, getting deeper and deeper until it transformed into an actual black mountain.

These were three figures as gigantic as mountains. They appeared in the grassland, separated by several hundred li and just happening to surround them in the center.

As the ground shook, the grass broke free of the binding wind and began to dance.

Bits of stone danced along with the grass.

This was because those three black mountains were moving. It didn't take long before they had arrived before Chen Changsheng's party.

They seemed like real black mountains, several dozen zhang high.

Two blazing torches were placed high up in the mountains. Those were his eyes.

The Earth Monkey hid behind Chen Changsheng, fear on its face as its eyes flitted to and fro. It was scared yet did not dare leave on its own.

As she looked at those massive black figures, Xu Yourong said, "Ever since I was small, I always believed that the Mountain Man of the Eight Greats was one person."

The black mountain right in front of them spoke.

His voice was a low drone, like the wind echoing in a mountain cave.

A chill instantly enveloped the grassland as the starlight dimmed even further.

The mountainous black figure seemed to be true darkness. Standing before Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong, it exerted an unimaginable pressure.

"There naturally have to be eight of the Eight Great Mountain Men."

It was rumored that in the old days, the Demon race had eight supreme experts.

To the various demon tribes, these eight experts were insurmountable peaks, so they were called the Eight Great Mountains.

Only today did Chen Changsheng confirm that these demon experts really did exist, and that they were actual mountains.

The misconception that Xu Yourong had probably arises from the fact that historically, 八大山人, Mountain Man of the Eight Greats, was an actual person, a noted painter who lived during the Ming

Dynasty.

Chapter 1125 – Black Robe's Lethal Trap

The Daoist Canon had always contained records regarding the Eight Great Mountain Men, so why was it only today that Chen Changsheng became sure of their existence, and why was it that to the majority of human commoners and cultivators, the Eight Great Mountain Men were rumors of practically mythical proportions? Because it had truly been many years since this name had last been heard.

In the years of the northern expeditions, the Eight Great Mountain Men were still the primary fighting force of the Demon race. They had played extremely important roles in the battle near Xuelao City, and Mountain Men Qilian and Helan had even died in that battle, one after the other. But after that battle, they disappeared, and nobody knew where they went. As time passed, people even began to doubt their existence.

Tonight, Chen Changsheng finally saw with his own eyes these rumored existences, and so he naturally knew that those records he had seen in the Daoist Canon were true.

The appearance of the Eight Great Mountain Men was deeply related to Grand Scholar Tungus, and there was a high chance that it was also related to that Pope of the Human race, thus leading to the 'Men' in their name. Of course, as ancient experts, almost totems of the Demon race, he could not hope they would give up their loyalty to the demons and stand with the humans.

But why had they disappeared back then? And why had they appeared tonight?

Chen Changsheng's spiritual sense fell on that massive figure to the north.

He sensed an invisible barrier that seemed to be solidified darkness. They were truly deserving of their reputation as ancient demon experts, as the Qi he sensed was even more formidable and

terrifying than the Qi he had sensed from the second-ranked Demon General Hai Di in the snowy mountains. It was no wonder that even though Xiao Zhang had broken through into the Divine Domain tonight, he had still suffered such heavy injuries and fallen unconscious.

The frequency at which Xiao Zhang's white paper trembled had already stabilized and his breathing was steady. He had just lost too much blood, making it hard to say when he would wake up.

Chen Changsheng looked back to that massive black silhouette and asked, "How should I address Senior?"

He wanted to use a conversation to buy some time, though he had no expectation of an answer. To his surprise, the mountain spoke once more.

This voice was like wind blowing from a cave deep in the mountains, the low drone seeming to contain extremely complex fluctuations.

Mountain Man Rouge? The Daoist Canon had not recorded the names or surnames of the Eight Great Mountain Men, and Chen Changsheng could only rely on the pronunciation to guess at the words. He did not know that this person was actually called [Mountain Man Yanzhi](#). Soon after, two more voices came from the south, upon which he came to know that the other two demon experts were called Mountain Man Yichun and Mountain Man Jingbo.

"Do the demons intend to declare war today?"

Chen Changsheng asked Mountain Man Yanzhi, his expression earnest and solemn.

The place they were standing was the grassland of the Elf race.

For thousands of years, the Demon race, Human race, Demi-human race, and the Elf race that lived on this grassland had engaged in countless wars. The black soil on which this green grass

grew was the result of the blood spilled from all these races. This fertility that rose from death was of deep significance to the three races.

Deep significance often meant greater sensitivity, which meant that it could easily start a war, so the three races had always been very cautious about this grassland. Even though the grassland ended up belonging to the Human race, it was mostly nominal. The Great Zhou Imperial Court had never stationed a garrison here. Tonight, the Eight Great Mountain Men who had been in hiding for so many years had suddenly appeared and pursued Xiao Zhang to this grassland, and now they were surrounding Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong. They clearly had grand ambitions, so how was this any different from a declaration of war?

"The war between our races has never stopped, so what need is there to make a new declaration?"

Mountain Man Yanzhi spoke this sentence slowly, his voice rather muddled, but his pronunciation was exceptionally precise, and it even seemed to carry the accent of Luling.

Chen Changsheng thought of the records in the Daoist Canon and found himself even more curious about that now-vanished period of history. The answer itself, on the other hand, left him confused.

Even the most ignorant child only needed to listen to stories in the tea houses and restaurants to know how the situation in the continent had changed over the last few years.

The Human race had welcomed a generation of blooming wildflowers while the Demon race declined at unimaginable speeds. Whether it was the bitterly cold climate, the sudden famine, or the internal conflicts between the tribes leading to a decrease in the number of potential soldiers, these factors were all slowly dragging this mighty race that had once dominated the continent into the abyss.

At this moment, the demons should have been thinking about to

protect themselves, not launching an attack on the humans. This was how the young Demon Lord had reigned over these last few years, not changing regardless of how many nobles in Xuelao City criticized him for being too conservative, some even going so far as to say that this was shameless. So why was Mountain Man Yanzhi so firm today?

Chen Changsheng said, "There is no chance of victory for you."

Mountain Man Yanzhi replied, "But tonight might be the Divine race's last chance."

Chen Changsheng asked, "What chance?"

Mountain Man Yanzhi explained, "Your Holiness the Pope is the fourth person to defy the heavens and change fate. We also want to try."

Chen Changsheng asked, "What do you want to change?"

"The momentum of an entire race's fate. The Divine race's momentum weakens by the day. If they do not gather their vigor, I am afraid that they will go extinct."

Mountain Man Yanzhi added, "What we want to try is defying the heavens and changing this momentum."

Chen Changsheng said, "In White Emperor City, I spoke with your noble lord. Something like the extinction of your race will not occur."

Mountain Man Yanzhi shook his head and rocks rustled down, gradually piling up on the grassland.

"No matter how warm the sunlight is, it cannot shine on every corner of the world. No matter how merciful Your Holiness is, you will not bestow it upon the people of the Divine race. You and the Emperor of the Great Zhou are Daoist Ji's students and the Holy Maiden is the Tianhai Divine Empress's student. Xuelao City will not trust any of your promises."

At this point of the conversation, the situation was plain to see: tonight, the demons did not want to kill just Xiao Zhang, but Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong as well.

Xiao Zhang had spent these last few years in the snowy plains, but he had not truly spent his time in complete hiding. At certain intervals, he would go and fight with the experts of the Demon Army. In battle after bloody battle, many demon experts, including several Demon Generals, lost to him, and some were even killed. He had also lost before and had been pursued many times. But Xuelao City had never sent any of their strongest experts, ones that could stand level with human experts of the Divine Domain, to kill Xiao Zhang. The primary reason was that they were worried that the Great Zhou Imperial Court might use Xiao Zhang's trail to lay a trap.

...Just like how Shang Xingzhou used the temptation of Chen Changsheng to lure the old Demon Lord into his trap in Mount Han.

But several dozen days ago, while Black Robe was observing the Southern Cross Constellation, he was taken by a sudden impulse. As if responding to something, he managed to calculate a shocking conclusion.

The Human race was about to welcome another expert of the Divine Domain.

In the campaign of White Emperor City, Bie Yanghong and Wuqiong Bi fell in battle, but the Demon race had paid the agonizing price of two Angels of Sacred Light. But in the last few years, the Prince of Xiang, the Mount Li Sword Sect Master, and Mao Qiuyu had all broken into the Divine. And last autumn, Daoist nun Huai Ren of South Stream Temple had encountered a fierce downpour while traveling the Eastern Sea and broken through. Coupled with the fact that Cao Yunping had regained his intelligence, in terms of number of Divine Domain experts, the Human race had already reached the number from its golden age.

If they gained another Divine Domain expert, how could the demons endure?

According to Black Robe's calculations, that newly ascended human expert was in the snowy plains of the demon realm, making their identity obvious.

Thus, the young Demon Lord had crossed the abyss to the lands of arctic cold and sincerely requested for those three secluded experts from ancient times to come forward. A trap was laid.

They would first kill Xiao Zhang before he broke through, and then they would kill the human experts that would come to receive him.

The names of the latter were clearly written in Black Robe's plans.

It was precisely Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

The words 胭脂 and 焉支 have the same pronunciation, which is 'Yanzhi'. The former, however, means 'rouge' while the latter is the name of a mountain.

Chapter 1126 – Drawing the Sword and Sheathing the Sword

"We do not like Black Robe, but it is not because he stole the glory of our deceased comrades.

"When I was little, I read many human stories and watched many of Xuelao City's plays. The traitors in them all had the ugliest of faces.

"He was the most shameless traitor of these last one thousand years.

"But I must admit to his abilities and praise him for this plan.

"Killing Xiao Zhang is not enough to alter the momentum of the world, but if we kill both the Pope and Holy Maiden of the Human race, the history to come will be greatly changed."

Mountain Man Yanzhi's voice echoed over the dark and desolate grassland.

In the end, however, problems had still occurred. They had not expected that under their monstrous pressure, Xiao Zhang would break through earlier than they expected.

Although he had just broken through and still did not have much mastery over the laws of the world, it had been enough for him to break through their encirclement with heavy injuries.

At the very least, he was still alive.

But Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong had still come over, which was excellent, quite excellent.

The grassland was extremely quiet in the darkness, the starlight imbued with a cold and gloomy aura.

The Earth Monkey poked its head out from behind Chen Changsheng and revealed its sharp fangs to that massive black

silhouette in the distance.

It wanted to scare that figure, but it didn't even dare to softly whimper. It had clearly been quite frightened by the mighty pressure exuded by this mountain.

Xu Yourong asked, "How could you be sure that we would be the ones to come?"

"Xiao Zhang is a madman and would not trust anyone, and he certainly wouldn't trust the Great Zhou Imperial Court. He only trusts Chen Changsheng."

Mountain Man Yanzhi added, "And if Chen Changsheng comes, you would assuredly appear."

Chen Changsheng would not be permitted to put himself in any possible danger, because he was the Pope of the Human race.

As he solidified his position as Pope, the power of this rule became stronger and stronger.

If he really did want to break free of this restriction, believers like An Hua really might use their deaths to rebuke him.

How could Linghai Zhiwang and the others let him leave White Emperor City alone?

Only one circumstance would have received the approval of all priests and believers.

He would be traveling with Xu Yourong.

The entire continent knew that the harmonious sword art of the Pope and the Holy Maiden was unimaginably powerful. Not even a Divine Domain expert could threaten their safety.

At present, Mao Qiuyu was overseeing Mount Han while the Prince of Xiang and the Prince of Zhongshan were stationed at Blue Pass and Snowhold Pass respectively, all of them seemingly ready to march out. The Demon Commander was personally leading the troops in battle while the majority of Xuelao City's Divine Domain

experts were on the frontlines. Logically speaking, there was no danger in having Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong stealthily receive Xiao Zhang and take him back to the Central Plains.

And yet, whether it was at Mount Han, Blue Pass, or Snowhold Pass, or the tents on the snowy plains stretching to the horizon, it was all fake.

Whether intentionally or unintentionally, aware or unaware, the humans and demons had all been acting out a play.

This isolated and peaceful grassland was the true battlefield.

The demons had invited the Eight Great Mountain Men.

No one had expected this.

Not even Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

Although only three of them had come, this was already a monstrous strength that they could not contend against.

"Why didn't you consider that it could be Wang Po who came?"

This was Xu Yourong's last question.

Wang Po and Xiao Zhang were lifelong rivals, and one could even describe Wang Po as a powerful foe who had suppressed Xiao Zhang for his entire life.

Xiao Zhang did not like Wang Po and spent every moment thinking about how to defeat him, but the person he trusted should also have been Wang Po, even more than he trusted Chen Changsheng.

It was just like how when Xun Mei was about to die, the person he wanted to see the most besides Mao Qiuyu was Wang Po.

In that generation in which the wildflowers first began to bloom, Wang Po had been their goal, so was he not also the source of their confidence and daring?

Moreover, Wang Po was an expert of the Divine Domain and a

master of the blade. If Xiao Zhang was seeking aid, Wang Po was unquestionably the best candidate.

The one to answer Xu Yourong's question was not Mountain Man Yanzhi, but Chen Changsheng.

"It would naturally be great for Wang Po to see him break through, but it would be awful for Wang Po to see him chased around in such a sorry state."

Chen Changsheng added, "It's very shameful."

Xu Yourong didn't have much understanding of a man's boring self-esteem, so it was only after hearing Chen Changsheng's answer that she understood.

But she still found it impossible to understand a man's willingness to throw away his life before throwing away his pride.

The white paper flapped as it moved.

Xiao Zhang was still unconscious, so it was hard to say if he had heard Chen Changsheng's words or felt Xu Yourong's thoughts.

The ground quaked as the nearby monster herds cast aside their concern for the Earth Monkey's viciousness and fled in utter terror.

A short while later, several yowls came out from the darkness, followed by the faint scent of blood.

Another odor was mixed in with the blood. Upon smelling it, Chen Changsheng knew that something was off.

It was not because he was slightly obsessed with cleanliness, but because he had smelled this odor before, on the battlefields of the snowy plains.

A thunderous stampede shook the grassland.

The scent of blood and rot grew stronger and stronger, almost about to tear open the darkness.

Several hundred wolf cavalry appeared on the grassland, surrounding Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

These bloodthirsty wolves were around a zhang high, and the demons mounted on them made them seem even larger.

The wolves' mouths gaped, exhaling hot and stinking breath, while their iron fur was starkly lit by the starlight.

The demon soldiers mounted on them were also clearly lit, the saliva constantly dripping from their 人-shaped mouths giving off just as awful a stench.

The wolf cavalry were the Demon race's most elite troops. In one-on-one combat, they could contend against, even defeat the black-armored cavalry of the Great Zhou.

And just how terrifying was the charging and killing power of several hundred wolf cavalry?

But in tonight's battle, these wolf cavalry that had traveled several thousand li for this long-distance raid were simply not worthy of being the main fighting force.

"The fate of the Divine race might be decided tonight, so I am being exceptionally cautious. I was also very cautious for the last few days, so I am very sure that he notified no one else, and I am also sure that you two were in too much of a rush to notify anyone else. I believe that I will have a great deal of time, so I will strike with great diligence and care to ensure that I thoroughly kill the two of you."

Mountain Man Yanzhi spoke to Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

In the darkness, his eyes shone like two torches, blazing with an intelligence and composure that could see through the world, but this also indicated how callous and terrifying he was.

Logically speaking, the conversation just now had been unnecessary. Mountain Man Yanzhi did not need to explain and

Chen Changsheng did not need a reason to be ambushed by the demons. But they had still carried out this question and answer session, as Chen Changsheng wanted to buy time and Mountain Man Yanzhi needed time to ensure that his encirclement was perfect.

The ground trembled as that massive black silhouette moved south. Although its speed was slow, it exerted a horrifying pressure.

Mountain Man Yanzhi's stance was clear: he was playing it safe tonight and did not want to see any gaps.

As he gazed at that black mountain in the darkness, Chen Changsheng thought for a while and then asked, "How much chance do we have?"

He was asking here about the chances of leaving alive, of course with Xiao Zhang in tow.

Xu Yourong and the White Crane were both as fast as lightning and were unmatched in terms of speed. If they used all their strength, not even the Eight Great Mountain Men could catch up, no matter how unfathomable their cultivation levels were.

The wind rustled her sleeves as Xu Yourong put away the Fated Star Plate. As it returned back into her sleeve, one could faintly see the stars moving along their orbits upon it.

She did not reply to Chen Changsheng's question, only shook her head.

It was clear that the result from the Fated Star Plate's calculation was utterly disastrous. Leaving... was simply impossible.

Since Black Robe had calculated that it would be Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong coming to pick up Xiao Zhang, he had naturally made the appropriate arrangements.

On the grasslands to the south of them, Mountain Men Jingbo and Yichun were like two mountain ranges, extending for several

dozen li and blocking all paths of escape.

If Zhizhi were here, their chances might have been a little better.

Chen Changsheng thought about that black-clothed girl who was probably sunbathing on the warm islands of the Southern Sea and felt no regret, only a little frustration.

"So what should we do next?"

He asked Xu Yourong.

This was trust.

In terms of calculation and strategy, there had always been only a scant few in the world that were stronger.

Xu Yourong looked at the Earth Monkey and then stated several numbers that stood for distance and coordinates.

She knew that it could understand what she was saying and knew what she wanted.

It was clear that the Earth Monkey truly had understood her, as its body had turned stiff out of fear.

Many years ago in that incident in the Garden of Zhou, it had seen Xu Yourong, so it knew of her relationship with Chen Changsheng.

Thus, it smartly chose not to look at Chen Changsheng, much less ask to be let off. Instead, it plunged straight into the ground.

In a short while, it came back up.

It was in terrible condition—its brown and shabby fur was covered in dirt and grass while a wound had appeared on its brow, blood spilling from it.

Chen Changsheng crushed a pill and sprinkled it over the wound.

The pill was made from the leftover ingredients of the Cinnabar Pill and it didn't have too miraculous of an effect, but it was extremely effective in staunching blood.

The Earth Monkey licked the blood on its lips and shot a glance at Xu Yourong, its eyes sinister and cold, tinged with a hint of loathing.

It could travel through the ground, but how could it hide from the spiritual sense of a powerful expert like Mountain Man Yanzhi?

Below a hill ten-some li away, it had been struck by a terrifying ripple of energy and suffered significant injuries.

In its view, Xu Yourong had forced it to do this, so it naturally held a grudge.

Chen Changsheng was treating it, so it did not notice the change in its expression.

Xu Yourong saw, but she did not care. "How was it?"

The Earth Monkey gave two soft shouts, its two short and thin forelegs gesturing in the air.

Xu Yourong watched with a serious expression. After engaging in another round of silent calculation, she turned to Chen Changsheng and said, "It's also no good."

Chen Changsheng turned to that black mountain in the darkness, his right hand dropping onto the hilt of his sword.

"Then we can only fight."

The Eight Great Mountain Men were ancient demon experts who, several hundred years ago, had battled in front of the walls of Xuelao City with Wang Zhice, Qin Zhong, and Yu Gong.

If he and Xu Yourong fought a head-on battle with them, their loss was assured.

The massive black silhouette slowly moved, the pressure of its unimaginable weight crushing down on Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

The dark grasslands had become terrifying to the extreme.

"The good news is that we only have to fight one."

Xu Yourong noted.

Unmoving like a mountain.

The Eight Great Mountain Men truly did possess unfathomable cultivation, seeming just like demon gods. When they did not move, they could even be described as perfect, invulnerable. But when they moved, they could no longer maintain their perfection, and chinks appeared in their armor.

It was just like the actual mountains under the starry sky. When they were connected to the earth, they were unshakable, but when they moved, their foundation was unsteady.

In today's lethal trap, Mountain Men Jingbo and Yichun stood to the south, cutting off Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong's paths of retreat, so they could not move.

Mountain Man Yanzhi and the several hundred wolf cavalry were the main assault force.

In truth, not even Mountain Man Yanzhi could keep his grandiose posture as he slowly moved over to them, shrouded in darkness.

Through her calculations on the Fated Star Plate and the Earth Monkey's risky venture through the ground, Xu Yourong had discovered a path that they could use to leave.

But she did not choose to use this path to leave or even mention it to Chen Changsheng.

It was not because of the bloodthirsty wolf cavalry or those ten-some vicious birds starkly lit against the Southern Cross Constellation. It was because she had sensed a hint of danger deep in the darkness, causing her to suspect that this path was highly likely to be a trap laid by Black Robe.

Mountain Man Yanzhi halted his steps.

Although no one was able to see how he was moving, and certainly no one was able to see his feet.

He was still ten li from Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

Ten li was an enormous distance to a normal person. It was hard to clearly see what was happening ten li away, much less launch attacks against it.

But it was at this time and place, ten li away, in such a surprising manner so bizarre that it went against common sense...

Mountain Man Yanzhi began to attack Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

He raised his right hand.

The uncountable stars in the sky suddenly dimmed.

Because a black silhouette, ten-some li tall, had obscured several hundred stars.

This black silhouette slapped down on the grassland.

The sky rumbled with thunder as air that was too late to escape was compressed and torn apart by a mighty strength.

Chen Changsheng felt like he had even heard a large part of the darkness being torn apart.

Xu Yourong drew her sword.

She attacked with her most powerful move, the Sword of Great Light.

Countless swords streaked across the deserted grassland, dragging with them countless flames.

The black silhouette was even more starkly lit against the sky, appearing even more real.

Chen Changsheng drew his sword immediately after.

He used the Blazing Sword of the Three Styles of the Wilderness.

Yes, after many years, the three sword styles that Su Li had passed to him in the wilderness had been formally named in the Daoist Canon.

Scorching, invisible flames poured into the light.

The sword intent of the Stainless Sword met the sword intent of the temple sword and then fused.

When these two sword intents met, they instantly seemed to flow in an endless stream, completely integrated into an object that was perfect and not from this mortal world.

This was South Stream Temple's Unity Sword Art.

And this was the harmonious sword art used by Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong that had stunned the entire continent.

A ball of light appeared in the dark grassland.

This ball of light was formed from the purest sword glows, and emitted a blazing and blinding light. It was like a sun at its zenith.

The ten-some-li black silhouette dropped down from the sky and fell precisely on the ball of light.

Boom!

An area of grass several dozen zhang in radius was flipped over, black streams of dirt shooting out like swift arrows in every direction.

The shroud of light condensed from sword glows hung in the night sky, several dozen zhang above Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong, resisting the terrifying pressure of the black silhouette.

The shroud of light creaked like an old and poorly-maintained door or a wooden stool about to break under some incredible weight.

The Earth Monkey had crawled behind Chen Changsheng, its thin forelegs covering its eyes as its body trembled all over in fear

while blood flowed from between its fingers. A moment ago, it had wanted to leave through the ground, but it had not expected that under the dual pressures of Mountain Man Yanzhi and the sky full of sword intent, the earth had been compacted until it was as hard as steel. As a result, it had only managed to ram its head against the ground, causing it to bleed.

The darkness resounded with cruel and ruthless howls.

The several hundred wolf cavalry madly charged toward Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

The mountains to the south stretched on for a hundred li, magnificent and impossible to cross.

Mountain Men Jingbo and Yichun were cutting off their retreat.

Mountain Man Yanzhi, from ten li away, had launched a grandiose attack.

The harmonious sword art of Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong was only barely able to defend against it.

With the wolf cavalry charging, how could they stop it?

At this moment, the Earth Monkey sneaked a glance at Chen Changsheng.

Sorrow appeared in its eyes.

It felt like it knew how Chen Changsheng would deal with this wolf cavalry.

Chen Changsheng would probably summon the monsters from the Garden of Zhou.

No matter how terrifying the wolf cavalry were, they were no match for all the many monsters in the Plains of the Unsetting Sun.

And these monsters would be accompanied by the Earth Monkey's two powerful comrades: the Monster Bull and Mountain-toppling Fiend.

But after killing the wolf cavalry, there would still be those three ancient experts of the Demon race.

Just how many of the Garden of Zhou's monsters would survive until the end?

The imagined conclusion left the Earth Monkey rather uncomfortable.

But it asked itself and knew that in this situation, it would do the same.

Thus, it did not make any complaints to Chen Changsheng, nor did it feel resentment, only a little sorrow.

.....

.....

Xu Yourong also knew that there were many monsters in the Garden of Zhou. As long as Chen Changsheng summoned them, they could resolve the danger posed by the wolf cavalry.

But she did not look at Chen Changsheng, neither sneaking a glance nor staring at him.

She was not the sad Earth Monkey, because her mind was truly linked with Chen Changsheng's, so she knew that Chen Changsheng would not take this approach.

To put it another way, she knew what Chen Changsheng intended to do.

She took a step forward and stood in front of Chen Changsheng.

Wings of pure white opened behind her as golden Phoenix flames began to burn, the temple sword in her hand releasing even more rays of light.

In a very short period of time, she had chosen to receive the part of the pressure being borne by Chen Changsheng's dagger.

Chen Changsheng sat cross-legged on the ground and closed his

eyes.

Whooshwhooshwhooshwhoosh. It sounded like a downpour dropping from the sky, swift arrows puncturing through the clouds.

Countless swords streamed out of the Vault Sheath, their sword glows lighting up the dark grassland.

Three thousand swords spread over the world, forming the South Stream Temple sword array.

At this moment, the starlight from the heavens seemed exceptionally dim.

Beneath the awe-inspiring sword intent, the wolf cavalry at the very front instantly broke up into several dozen chunks of meat.

Right after, another giant wolf's forelimbs were cut off, causing it to crash to the ground.

To the northwest, the horn and helmet of a demon soldier were neatly lopped off, revealing his brains, clear and crystalline in the starlight, appearing like the world's smallest lake.

Screams and the thuds of objects falling to the ground continued without end.

Blood of indistinguishable hue watered the ground.

The wolf cavalry had charged quickly and fallen even faster.

In just a few seconds, thirty-some wolf cavalry had died to the South Stream Temple sword array while ten-some wolf cavalry were so heavily injured that they could no longer fight.

Hurried orders were yelled out from the darkness.

Mountain Man Yanzhi's heavy voice rang out from ten li away.

The wolf cavalry stopped their charge. They circled around Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong and retreated into the darkness, only stopping when they were several hundred zhang away.

Snick!

A thin sword silently appeared in the sky and cut the throat of a demon soldier.

The starlight was brighter than it had been a moment ago.

The sight of green blood flowing out of black-furred hands was truly disgusting.

In panic, the wolf cavalry fell back even further. Only when they were several li away and sure that they were out of the sword array's range did they stop.

Many of the demons had fear in their eyes.

They had seen many experts before, but they had never encountered this way of fighting.

The South Stream Temple array could be considered the perfect defense on the battlefield and was also highly effective at attacking groups.

But in the past, several hundred South Stream Temple disciples had been needed to form the sword array, so the demon experts could launch sneak attacks from various directions, increasing the risk of the array breaking.

Now, Chen Changsheng alone could use the South Stream Temple sword array. Standing in the storm of swords as he was, how could anyone break the array?

In other words, no one else could be more appropriate than Chen Changsheng for killing enemies on the battlefield, even if they were stronger than him.

Was the young Pope of the Human race really this monstrous?

The several hundred wolf cavalry shrilly howled.

Out of fear, anger, and unwillingness.

The demon soldiers and their giant wolves wanted to use this

method to express their desire for revenge.

They stopped several li away, waiting for their next moment to charge.

Separated by such a distance, Chen Changsheng could not control his swords to injure them, no matter how formidable his spiritual sense was.

As long as they applied enough pressure on the pair, they could just wait until Mountain Man Yanzhi broke through the defense.

Once Chen Changsheng formed the South Stream Temple sword array, Xu Yourong had been left alone to bear the pressure of Mountain Man Yanzhi's attack.

Even though she had immediately begun to burn Phoenix flames, she could not last for too long.

Chen Changsheng's sword array was needed to defend against another charge from the wolf cavalry, so how long could she last? Could she possibly last forever?

In the current situation, the ultimate conclusion would still be Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong being suppressed Mountain Man Yanzhi and then torn to death by the wolf cavalry.

At least in the view of the demon soldiers, this was the foregone conclusion.

They watched from the distance as they thought about how they would soon kill the human Pope and Holy Maiden, then tear them to pieces and eat them. Their eyes turned vicious as their breathing became heavier.

Xu Yourong's complexion was somewhat pale. She appeared to be reaching her breaking point.

At this critical moment, she suddenly did something almost completely unexpected.

The light filling the sky suddenly vanished.

She had sheathed the temple sword.

Who would come to defend against Mountain Man Yanzhi's pressure?

The South Stream Temple sword array in the sky suddenly moved, turning in an orderly fashion to a certain direction.

That dense collection of swords had originally been pointed at the surrounding grassland, but now they were pointed at the sky.

It was still a storm of swords, though it was now prepared to ascend to the sky.

Three thousand swords went to welcome that black silhouette.

Starlight and sword glows reflected off each other and created a splendor that made the night sky even brighter.

The true appearance of that black silhouette ten-some li long was finally revealed.

Chapter 1127 – [My Arrows](#)

The black silhouette could be called a mountain range, and it could also be described as the arm of a demon god.

At the very front of the mountain range, precisely the part of the sky over Chen Changsheng's and Xu Yourong's heads, were five mountain peaks that looked just like five fingers.

The storm of swords descended upon these mountains, dust rising as the rocks cracked.

The speed at which the mountains sank down grew slower and slower until, finally, they stopped.

In this entire process, Xu Yourong never once glanced up at the night sky. She seemed unconcerned, and one could naturally understand this as the trust she had in Chen Changsheng.

She thrust the temple sword into the grass beside her.

There was a soft whoosh as smoke began to rise from the grass, but it did not burn. On the contrary, the grass grew straighter and seemed even more full of life.

She took a longbow made of tong wood from her back.

This bow made of tong wood was that bow ranked on the Tier of Legendary Weapons, the Tong Bow.

Only Nanke, Chen Changsheng, Qiushan Jun, and Gou Hanshi knew that Xu Yourong's strongest skill was not in the sword.

The temple sword had been found by Chen Changsheng in the Garden of Zhou and returned to Holy Maiden Peak.

She had only mastered the Sword of Great Light after receiving the temple sword.

She had carried the Tong Bow on her back, however, ever since she was a child.

Usually, no one could see this longbow.

It would only appear when needed.

...Like now.

Xu Yourong took out an arrow and nocked it on the string.

This was a Wu Arrow.

With a calm expression, she raised the bow.

Her movements were calm and practiced, like drifting clouds or flowing water, but also like ten-some drawings layered over each other, each action clear and explicit.

The bowstring was pulled taut, gradually taking the shape of the Moon in the north worshipped by the demons.

Her eyelashes blinked.

The wind stirred.

Her white robes floated in the wind.

Her black hair also floated upward, rising level with the arrow.

The delicate fingers left the string.

The Tong Bow strummed.

It was said that the best zithers were made of tong wood, so it was no wonder that this sound was so moving.

The note echoed across the grassland.

The arrow arrived before the sound.

Several li away...

A bloody hole appeared between the eyes of a demon soldier.

It was an extremely round and smooth hole. One even felt the urge to describe it as delicate.

Xu Yourong then drew the bow a second time, a third time, a fourth time...

Her actions remained steady, beautiful in their simplicity and conciseness.

Her quiver was swiftly emptied.

Thirty Wu Arrows left the bowstring of the Tong Bow and flew into the darkness toward the wolf cavalry several li away.

Groan after groan followed.

Flower after flower of blood bloomed.

Soldier after demon soldier fell.

Cries of fear rose one after the other.

The wolf cavalry scattered.

Thirty arrows could at most kill only thirty times.

Logically speaking, breaking up the party was the best choice.

Xu Yourong once more raised the Tong Bow, even though she had no more arrows.

This time, she clearly needed much more time.

Finally she let the bowstring go.

The bowstring was stained with a little blood. When this blood met and chafed against the wind, it burst into golden flames.

Those arrows that pierced through the skulls of demon soldiers...

Those arrows that had penetrated through the bodies of giant wolves...

Those Wu Arrows, bringers of death that then vanished into the darkness... suddenly returned.

Thirty Wu Arrows left behind trails of fire as they pursued the scattered wolf cavalry. They were like blazing birds of fire, gorgeous shooting stars.

Many years ago in the Garden of Zhou, at the end of Sunset Valley, Nanke had experienced this attack.

This was the first time since that night that Xu Yourong had used this attack.

How could those wolf cavalry escape?

Puffpuffpuffpuff.

From all over the grassland came the sound of a Wu Arrow piercing through hardy objects.

The Wu Arrows and their tails of fire pursued the wolf cavalry and drove away the darkness. Everywhere they went, death followed.

After some time, those sounds finally stopped.

The dark grassland finally calmed back down.

But it was more appropriate to call this a deathly stillness.

Because this grassland had become a graveyard.

The ground within seven li of her was littered with fallen corpses.

Both the demon soldiers and giant wolves had died. There were no lucky survivors.

In the reflected starlight, the grassland seemed wet.

This was not a bare mountain, but it felt like rain had just passed.

Though this was not soft rain, but blood.

Xu Yourong thrust the Tong Bow into the ground.

The Tong Bow was very long, so when thrust into the ground, it was even higher than she was. It really did look like an upright zither.

In truth, it was not a zither, but a tree.

In an instant, countless branches sprouted from the Tong Bow, all of them covered in leaves that lightly swayed in the wind.

A fresh and clean air fell like a waterfall over her and Chen

Changsheng, and also on the Earth Monkey.

The Earth Monkey had just been sneaking a glance at her. At first stricken with shock, it then felt like its wounds were improving at unthinkable speeds.

The branches continued to grow, quickly transforming into a massive tree.

This was the Wutong tree.

This Wutong tree contained the array of the Tong Palace.

She picked the temple sword back up and walked to Chen Changsheng's side, looking at that mountain in the darkness.

"The Wutong can last for eighty seconds. Use it to think about any other methods."

Her temples were tinged with sweat and her expression was rather tired, but her eyes were so calm that it seemed like she had done nothing at all.

.....

.....

A lonely Wutong tree suddenly appeared in the dark grassland.

The branches spread out beneath the several thousand swords, blocking the mountain in the sky.

The Tong Bow and Wu Arrows combined became the Wutong. A previous Holy Maiden of South Stream Temple had used her unfathomable wisdom and ability to embed the Tong Palace array in this set of bow and arrows, even increasing its power. Only a divine artifact like this was capable of blocking the attack of a legendary individual like Mountain Man Yanzhi.

Of course, not even this Wutong tree could last forever.

Countless peals of thunder boomed over the grassland.

This was the sound of a mountain moving over the ground,

crushing the rock and dirt beneath it.

Mountain Man Yanzhi was walking toward them.

His speed was very slow, but there was no gap in his defense. He was a moving mountain range, exerting an unimaginable pressure.

Another mountain was in the sky, exuding an ancient and timeworn Qi. So heavy it was that it made one's heart beat in fear.

The Wutong tree rustled as several hundred leaves rained down. The trunk gradually began to bend, creaking as it neared its breaking point.

Several thousand swords incessantly hacked at this mountain. A fleck of stone would occasionally drift down and disperse in wisps of light.

Chen Changsheng's eyelashes incessantly blinked, his head lowered to the ground in thought.

Xu Yourong was having him think of a way. If he couldn't find one, they would have to risk a fight.

Chen Changsheng's personality was not one that delighted in risks, but what other method did he have, staring at the ground as he was?

It wasn't like he could stare a flower into blooming out of the ground.

In actuality, Chen Changsheng really was looking at a flower.

Xiao Zhang lay unconscious on the ground.

The white paper on his face would occasionally shift in the wind, causing the specks of blood to transform. They looked like winter plums in the wind.

The two holes left in the paper were for the eyes, while the nose and mouth had both been drawn on.

This was where Painted Armor Xiao Zhang's name came from.

Why did Xiao Zhang cover his face in a white sheet of paper? This was a question that everyone was interested in.

Some people said he had a birthmark on his face that made it extremely ugly.

Others said that he was born with extremely delicate features that caused others to mistake him for a girl when he was young, and he would even encounter weird problems sometimes. Thus, he had chosen to cover his face with a mask.

The most famous and most publicly acknowledged explanation was that Xiao Zhang, in a bid to surpass Wang Po, forced his cultivation on an evil path. In the end, he went mad and was heavily injured, his face especially almost totally ruined, leading him to cover it with a white sheet of paper. It was said that the Elder of Heavenly Secrets had once asked him why he didn't use a mask or bamboo hat. Xiao Zhang said that he used the white paper to cover his face because he didn't want to scare children, not because he was ashamed of seeing people, so why did he need to use a mask? As for why he didn't wear a bamboo hat, it was because it would make others feel even more dejected.

Based on Chen Changsheng's understanding of Xiao Zhang, this conversation between him and the Elder of Heavenly Secrets was probably fake. It was said that Xiao Zhang had made this comment in a very casual and flippant manner, so the explanation itself was probably not true either. Xiao Zhang's face probably did not bear any terrifying wounds.

So just what was underneath the white paper?

Many people wanted to tear this white paper off and take a look, but those who dared to do so were few and far between, and those people were all dead.

Xiao Zhang was currently unconscious, so this was the best opportunity to see his true face.

This was truly a great temptation, one that Chen Changsheng seemed incapable of resisting. He stretched out his hand, preparing to tear away the white sheet of paper.

But a demon expert was pressing down on them like a mountain, their situation one of extreme peril, so how was he still in the mood to think about things like this?

The form of 'My' here is the word 吾, pronounced 'wu', sharing the same pronunciation as the 'wu' of the Wutong tree and also Xu Yourong's Wu Arrows.

Chapter 1128 – The Unbridled Spear and Heartbreaking Arrow

Chen Changsheng's hand got closer and closer to Xiao Zhang's face, all the way until it touched the edge of the paper.

Perhaps because it had been soaked by sweat or stained with too much blood, the edge of the white paper was not at all sharp. It was like a pastry that had been left on the humid banks of the Tong River for three days.

The moment his finger touched the white paper, the two black holes in the paper suddenly lit up.

Xiao Zhang had opened his eyes.

He had woken up.

Of course, it was also possible that he had never fallen unconscious in the first place.

No shock was visible on Chen Changsheng's face, so he probably knew of this already. He asked, "Have you rested enough?"

Xu Yourong did not turn around. She calmly gazed at that mountain in the sky.

The South Stream Temple sword array was getting closer and closer to the ground, pressed down by the heavy Qi of that mountain.

The Wutong tree was shedding more and more leaves, the trunk creaking more and more. The bark had begun to crack in several places, revealing the white underneath.

Xiao Zhang looked at Chen Changsheng and said, "No one has ever dared to tear off this piece of paper. There was no one in the past, and there's certainly no one now."

His voice was cold and emotionless, just like the look in his eyes.

In the past, he had been an expert of the Proclamation of Liberation. This coupled with his reputation as madman and murderer naturally meant that no one dared to provoke him.

Now that he had successfully entered the Divine Domain, there were even fewer people who dared to provoke him.

Chen Changsheng completely ignored the threat in his words, saying, "If you're not willing to wake up, I might as well tear that paper off."

Xiao Zhang said, "I'm a little sleepy. Can you not even hold on? Truly useless."

Only a madman like him would dare to use this tone with the Pope and Holy Maiden.

Chen Changsheng still did not care. He said, "Even if we took shifts in enduring, there will still come a moment in which we can't hold on anymore."

Xiao Zhang understood what he meant and froze.

Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong had unexpectedly decided to no longer delay, instead preparing to fight and kill.

Where did their confidence come from?

"Since it's between fighting and getting killed, we naturally have to fight."

Chen Changsheng smiled at him. "Perhaps we lose or perhaps we win. Who knows?"

His smile was the clean, pure and warm smile of a youth.

Xiao Zhang found it horrifying.

In a serious affair like this, they had casually decided to fight?

Both the Tong Palace and the South Stream Temple sword array could still resist Mountain Man Yanzhi for some time.

Though heavily injured, he was still a newly ascended expert of

the Divine Domain.

In this situation, Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong had decided to no longer wait and go straight to fighting and killing Mountain Man Yanzhi!

Did not they not understand that Mountain Man Yanzhi, as an ancient expert of the Demon race, was much more powerful than those Demon Generals, was perhaps even on par with the Demon Commander? Did they not understand that if the Pope and Holy Maiden of the Human race, along with the newly ascended Divine Domain expert that was him, all died in battle tonight, history really might change? They clearly could continue to wait, so why the need to fight and kill? And why was Chen Changsheng even smiling right now, his smile so clean? And Xu Yourong was still in the mood to hold her hands behind her back and look at the stars?

The common people said that Xiao Zhang was a madman, but he felt that Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong were even crazier than he was.

What was the reason for this?

He suddenly understood the answer.

This was drive.

The drive of youths.

He was several decades older than Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong, but in the lifespan of cultivators, he still counted as young.

His gaze turned sharp like a silver spear washed in autumn waters, glimmering with an icy chill.

"How much longer do we have?"

He walked to Xu Yourong's side and asked.

Xu Yourong answered, "Forty-seven seconds."

Xiao Zhang's hoarse voice once more pierced through the white

paper.

"I'll go and break his mountain's momentum."

He raised his spear and walked to the darkness in the north.

He did not even glance at that mountain range over his head.

The true mountain several li away was where he was prepared to go.

A few days ago, he sensed the signs that he was about to break through and immediately concluded his life of hiding and fighting on the snowy plains, beginning his journey back south on the path he had arranged for back then. Just when he was about to return to the land of humans by passing through the grassland, he saw three massive mountains suddenly rise out of the wilderness.

Mountain Men Yanzhi, Jingbo, and Yichun.

In the face of these terrifying experts from ancient times, it was simply impossible for him to escape. His death seemed inevitable, but unexpectedly, this unprecedented pressure actually led him to cross that threshold and break into the Divine Domain ahead of time. Experiencing danger after danger, he finally managed to escape, though he suffered serious injuries in doing so.

Flying a kite over the mountains, he saw Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong. His mind instantly relaxed, his injuries and fatigue exploding at the same time and instantly sending him into unconsciousness.

After resting for a while, though his injuries had not recovered, he had recovered from much of his mental fatigue.

The most important factor of all was still the appearance of Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

The two Saints of the highest status in the Human race had come together to pick him up.

This was something to be very proud of. Even someone as

arrogant as him thought so.

For this, he was willing to fight another battle.

But he had said 'I'll go and break his mountain's momentum', not 'I've broken his mountain's momentum'.

He did not believe that he could break through Mountain Man Yanzhi's defense, or even leave alive.

The somber winds caused his white paper to flap. It seemed inauspicious.

But his figure was not at all somber.

Because his spear stood straight, its red tassel fluttering in the breeze.

Because his will to fight was soaring to the heavens.

.....

.....

Xu Yourong drew back her gaze and looked toward that darkness several li away. "There's only one chance."

Chen Changsheng understood what she meant.

By suppressing his wounds, Xiao Zhang could use his strongest strike once. Even if he was still capable of fighting afterward, none of his attacks would be as strong as this one.

In other words, if they wanted to charge head-on and break through Mountain Man Yanzhi, they only had one chance.

The wind swept across their faces. It was a little chilly, but it could not be described like a knife. It was more like the water in the stream outside Xining Village in the early spring.

Chen Changsheng clenched his left hand into a fist, as the stone pearls that were the Heavenly Tome Monoliths dropped from his sleeve and onto his wrist.

The weight of these stone pearls steadied his mind, but he needed

to take a deep breath to truly calm down.

.....

.....

In the darkness, Mountain Man Yanzhi really did look like a mountain.

Not a mountain range in the distance, but a real and authentic mountain of rock.

It was not a particularly large mountain, but it seemed to be one with the rocks of the earth, making it unmovable.

Xiao Zhang walked up to the mountain and stopped.

The starlight fell on his face and reflected off the white paper. It appeared even whiter, somewhat like the Moon behind Xuelao City.

Strangely, the fluttering red tassel had actually managed to snatch up the starlight.

The starlight seemed to become real, forming into strands and threads.

The world was relative.

If the illusory could become real, what of the real objects?

In the starlight, Xiao Zhang's body began to flicker as if about to vanish.

If one only relied on their eyes, it was simply impossible to pin down his exact position.

This was the manifestation of one's Dao once one was thoroughly linked with the laws of the world.

He had only broken into the Saint Realm tonight, so he still did not have sufficient understanding of these laws, much less any mastery, but it was clear that he had already progressed a great deal.

This was the ability of a Divine Domain expert. Whether fighting or sleeping, they could deepen the understanding between them and the world.

The two flames at the top of the mountain were cold and serene.

A deep and indifferent voice emerged from the mountain.

"Purely in terms of the strength of your will to fight, you could be ranked in the top three from the last few centuries."

Mountain Man Yanzhi seemed to know that Xiao Zhang still had the strength to fight, but he did not care.

Even though Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong were also present, he still did not care.

He had a very indifferent attitude and was even in the mood to evaluate Xiao Zhang.

Given his experience, this sort of evaluation could be considered high praise.

Xiao Zhang seemed ungrateful. "For a monster, you're rather talkative."

The Demon race had always called themselves the Divine race, but they were not angry at being called demons. This was the reasoning behind the saying 'demon and god in one body'. However, they loathed being called monsters, because this term was easily associated with the Demi-human race, and in the long river of history, the Demi-human race had spent the majority of the time as slaves to the Demon race.

Mountain Man Yanzhi's eyes grew even colder, even more serene.

Xiao Zhang sneered, "What? You're covered in stone from top to bottom, so you have to be a monster. Are you not convinced?"

Mountain Man Yanzhi said, "I am a mountain man."

Xiao Zhang laughed, "Hahahaha! What mountain man? You're

just an old monster in a black mountain!"

His scratchy laughter echoed over the grassland.

The laughter suddenly stopped.

Xiao Zhang thrust his spear.

The starlight spilling over the grassland looked just like the shallow waters of a stream.

As the spear thrust forward, this starlight suddenly moved, transforming into a cloth.

As the spear struck the mountain, the starlight followed, bursting apart into countless flecks of silver.

It was a display of breathtaking beauty, appearing like both fireworks and a flower blooming.

.....

.....

A silver flower suddenly bloomed in the darkness several li away.

Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong knew that this was the spear clashing with the mountain.

Soon after, a yellow dragon appeared over there, streaked with a hint of red, howling as it rose into the air.

The clash of these two powerful Qis caused all the gravel in the several li surrounding them to rise, dimming the starlight and making it difficult to see.

Mountain Man Yanzhi truly did have an unfathomable cultivation level. While dealing with the terrifying might of the spear, he had not forgotten to continue suppressing Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

The mountain range in the night sky suddenly pressed downward, the five finger-like mountains plunging straight into the South Stream Temple sword array.

The air was filled with grating screeches.

The swords hacked countless rocks off from the mountains. They rustled down and scattered into specks of light in midair.

The mountainous palm had gotten even closer to the ground.

The Wutong tree was now severely bent and could snap at any moment. Its green leaves were almost completely exhausted.

Xu Yourong had already prepared herself for this. With her habitual calm, she softly said, "Go."

In a flash of light, the Earth Monkey disappeared.

Chen Changsheng sent it back into the Garden of Zhou before gripping her hand.

A pair of pure white wings unfurled in the night breeze, blazing with golden flames.

A stream of light flowed through the grassland as two streaks of Phoenix flame pierced through the darkness.

A hole was punched in the screen of dust and grass formed by the fierce winds.

Xu Yourong and Chen Changsheng appeared in front of Mountain Man Yanzhi.

Two sword glows appeared, dazzlingly bright, then they fused into a striking sword rainbow.

The spear appeared again, traveling together with the sword rainbow to strike the mountain in a supremely unbridled fashion, causing a most arrogant flower to appear in the darkness.

The ground quaked as an explosion reverberated through the world.

Countless stones shot out, tearing through the darkness like arrows. Countless beasts in a radius of several dozen li were smashed to death.

As the dust settled, Mountain Man Yanzhi's figure gradually appeared.

Two extremely deep scars had appeared in the center of the mountain. From the look of it, they seemed about a foot deep.

These two scars intersected so that they looked like that constellation familiar to all the demon nobles of Xuelao City, the Southern Cross.

Their place of intersection was even deeper, the hole it made very round and smooth, like an artisan had bored it out with a tool. It appeared to extend far into the mountain.

This was the mark left by the spear.

If this mountain was a person, the place where the swords intersected and the spear had left a hole was a person's chest. Just a little to the left was where the Ethereal Palace was located.

The unbridled spear and harmonious pair of swords had finally broken through Mountain Man Yanzhi's defense.

That place was Mountain Man Yanzhi's only flaw.

This had been calculated by Xu Yourong.

The question was, had the hole completely pierced through the mountain?

.....

.....

The grassland's surface was scored with holes, the black soil and grass mixed into an inseparable mess.

Xiao Zhang lay on the ground, the paper on his face soaked in blood, his eyes fixed on Mountain Man Yanzhi several dozen zhang away.

Chen Changsheng had also been severely wounded. He sat cross-legged on the ground, his face pale as he constantly coughed.

The holes in the paper were black and Xiao Zhang's eyes were also dark and deep. His voice was as hoarse as a broken bell.

"Damn, was this still not enough?"

Chen Changsheng sighed.

They had broken through the mountain, but they had failed to flatten it.

Xu Yourong stood up and once more drew her longbow.

Her face was very pale, and as she pulled on the bowstring, it paled even further, becoming as white as snow.

Her black hair drifted over her cheeks, contrasting so starkly that it frightened the soul.

A stream of blood spurted out of her mouth.

The spots of blood on her white robes looked like crumpled petals.

The Qi she exuded was even stronger.

The bowstring moved without a sound.

A small and delicate arrow flew through the darkness, silently shooting toward the mountain.

Without the smallest error, it shot into the hole.

There was a light pop like something had broken.

Xiao Zhang and Chen Changsheng felt a terrible pain in their chests.

Because they had heard that sound.

It was the sound of the heart breaking.

Xu Yourong's face was as white as a sheet of paper. Her body swayed as blood trickled down the corners of her lips.

Even she herself had been injured by that small and delicate arrow.

Mountain Man Yanzhi had naturally suffered the worst wound.
A howl of supreme pain and anger rose from the mountain.

Chapter 1129 – [The Death of My Mount](#) [Yanzhi](#)

The mountain shuddered, sending rocks tumbling down from its face and crashing to the ground, and stirring up dust that obscured Mountain Man Yanzhi's figure.

After some time, the dust finally settled. The mountain had clearly shrunk, but it still towered over the dark grassland. It had not toppled.

The mountain was still a mountain.

At this sight, a hint of disappointment finally appeared on Xu Yourong's face.

"The Holy Maiden's methods truly are extraordinary."

Mountain Man Yanzhi's voice was still deep, but the careful listener might be able to notice that it was slightly trembling, concealing a hint of anger.

Xiao Zhang used his spear to help his tired body stand.

The white paper flapped in the wind, the black holes incredibly dark and serene.

"Again."

He spoke in his raspy voice, apparently not caring about the current situation.

Chen Changsheng said nothing.

Several li away, the storm of swords prepared to return.

Xu Yourong also said nothing as she once more extracted the Fated Star Plate from her sleeve.

The starlight fell on the Fated Star Plate, flowing along the orbits of the stars and releasing rays of light, both deep and shallow.

She had calculated many times the conclusion of today's events, and all of them predicted disaster. That small and delicate arrow had also failed to reach its target, leaving her somewhat disappointed. But since the battle had not yet ended, they had to continue. If the Fated Star Plate could not give a good result, then she would use it as a weapon in battle. Might that produce a different result?

Imbued with the might of the heavens and earth, the spear rumbled toward the mountain.

Two sword glows once more met, cleaving open the world with a stance that seemed intent on setting the world ablaze.

The winds raged as dust rose into the air once more.

In this world of dust, Xu Yourong continued to stare at that black hole, her fingers moving to and fro across the Fated Star Plate.

Mountain Man Yanzhi had suffered significant injuries, and now he felt even greater danger.

Both from Xiao Zhang's spear and Xu Yourong's Fated Star Plate.

But what made him most wary of all was that Qi that could set the world ablaze, revealed by the combination of Chen Changsheng's and Xu Yourong's swords.

This made him recall that man of the Human race that had terrorized the world many years ago.

Wariness and danger, coupled with those memories he wished that he could not recall, made Mountain Man Yanzhi truly angry.

An angry howl tore through the dark clouds, sending them drifting away.

The mountain range seemed to congregate while the grassland seemed to bulge upward into furious waves.

Mountain Man Yanzhi's cultivation spanning several thousand years was fully displayed!

The flash of the spear faded while the glow of the swords dimmed.

Xiao Zhang angrily roared as he bitterly endured.

Chen Changsheng stood up, his left hand extending toward the mountain in front of him.

At this moment, Xu Yourong abruptly looked toward the Fated Star Plate.

The stars on the Fated Star Plate were circling their orbits at unfathomable speeds, creating countless complex and incomprehensible images.

She was somewhat puzzled.

Just what had happened?

More precisely, just what would happen soon that would stimulate so many changes in this battle and the entire course of history?

The dark clouds had been ripped to shreds and sent drifting into the distance, leaving the sky clear and allowing the starlight to flourish.

Suddenly, a line of fire appeared high up in the sky.

This line of fire seemed to almost instantly arrive over the grassland.

The line of fire came from the south. Logically speaking, Mountain Men Jingbo and Yichun should have been able to stop it, but for some reason, they had let it go. Perhaps it was because this line of fire could not affect the course of this battle.

A Red Cloud Qilin appeared at the end of the line of fire.

The Red Cloud Qilin flapped its wings, but no one was riding it.

The whole world knew that Xue Xingchuan, the second-ranked Divine General of the Great Zhou, had used a Red Cloud Qilin as

his mount. Was this the same one?

Ten-some years ago, Xue Xingchuan was poisoned to death in the Imperial Palace by Zhou Tong. His Red Cloud Qilin had vanished deep in the palace and was never seen again.

Why had it appeared today? Just what did it signify?

The grassland was still.

This stillness lasted for only a moment.

But to Mountain Man Yanzhi, Xiao Zhang, Chen Changsheng, Xu Yourong, and the Mountain Men to the south, this was an extremely long moment of time.

It was like this stillness had persisted for several years.

The world was relative.

Position was relative.

Time was also relative.

Feeling that time was longer than the time that was actually passing could be because a new reference object to this shard of time was traveling too quickly.

A blade glow was coming.

It came from the heavens.

It was not a gorgeous blade glow, but composed and quiet.

Compared to the fierce winds and clouds of gravel and dust that had yet to dissipate, this blade glow could be described as smooth and fine.

Compared to Mountain Man Yanzhi's fury, this blade glow could be described as very warm and gentle.

But this blade glow was truly too fast.

If this blade glow slashed at flowing water, the flowing water would assuredly be severed.

If this blade glow slashed at time, which flowed like water, time would also stop for a few moments.

By the time anyone could see this blade glow, it would have already descended.

There was a soft swish.

The blade glow fell into the mountain.

There were no flying rocks, no rising dust.

The blade glow seem to submerge into the mountain.

And then, the mountain toppled.

The earth quaked.

This was the shifting of a mountain range.

Two deep roars came from the darkness in the south.

These were roars of anguish and rage.

Chen Changsheng felt like these roars were somewhat similar to Dragon language.

An even more arduous battle was probably going to take place.

He stood up, prepared to fight.

At this moment, a low howl came from the toppled mountain.

It was Mountain Man Yanzhi's voice.

This time, Chen Changsheng could hear it more clearly. He realized that this was not the standard Demon language, nor was it the ancient Demon language favored by the nobles of Xuelao City.

He turned to Xu Yourong. She softly shook her head.

Although they could not understand exactly what he was saying, they could roughly understand Mountain Man Yanzhi's current emotional state and the information he wanted to transmit.

Mountain Man Yanzhi was not angry, not unwilling, not resentful. He was very calm.

The two mountain ranges stopped. After letting out several low hums, they moved west, gradually disappearing into the darkness.

The southern region of the grassland returned to silence, leaving only the sorrow of parting.

Blood was trickling down the edge of the paper. Xiao Zhang touched it, and the wet feeling left him very annoyed.

He was even more annoyed by the person standing next to him.

"Such a good chance, so why aren't you chasing? Why are you just standing around like an idiot? Are you hoping that someone will make a statue of you?"

The person these words were aimed at was unaffected by this jeering.

He had heard far too much of this sort of words over the last few decades, and he knew how to counter it.

"If you weren't injured or could at least walk two steps, perhaps I would be able to chase after them."

Xiao Zhang had a nasty complexion, but he could not counter this fact.

He truly was injured quite severely. He truly could no longer move.

The most important fact was that this person had saved him, whether he liked it or not.

.....

.....

Dust settled and rocks rolled across the grassland.

A person walked out of the toppled mountain.

This person was dressed in white, his hair was white, and his body was also white.

This was not the white of snow, nor was it the white of paper. It

was a white that was faintly suffused with a gem-like luster, the white of white jade.

This person had very elegant features and smooth skin. Neither his forehead nor hands showed any wrinkles. He did not seem alive.

If not for the demon horn on his head, he might have been mistaken for a statue of white jade sculpted by an artisan of the Mutuo clan.

This legendary and ancient expert of the Demon race had actually been this handsome.

Chen Changsheng suddenly recalled the first time he saw the Demon Lord in Mount Han.

The Demon Lord had also been a very elegant scholar.

Xiao Zhang snorted, seemingly unhappy.

It was hard to say if it was out of shame at his own inferiority or disdain.

The answer was not in the wind, but beneath the white paper.

This person was Mountain Man Yanzhi.

The mountain was his demon body.

This was his actual body.

"If you truly did chase after them, the final result would just be a loss on both sides."

Mountain Man Yanzhi looked at the man next to Xiao Zhang and said, "Even though you are Wang Po."

The person wore a blue gown now faded from being washed too many times. His shoulders and brows were both drooped, making him look just like a hard-pressed accountant.

Of course, he was Wang Po.

"Senior's cultivation truly is unfathomable. My side's four people

together barely managed to win. I naturally hold no rash delusions."

This was reality.

Xiao Zhang's despotic spear working together with the harmonious swords of Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong, the sword array and the Tong Bow, the strongest methods at their disposal, had still not been able to defeat Mountain Man Yanzhi, only heavily wound him. Only the accumulated energy of Wang Po's blade from above the heavens finally made him lose this battle.

Xiao Zhang, Chen Changsheng, and Xu Yourong no longer had the strength to fight, so Wang Po would find it very difficult to defeat the combined might of Mountain Men Jingbo and Yichun.

Of course, this proposition reversed was also true.

Mountain Man Yanzhi explained, "Thus, I stopped them from attacking and had them leave."

Wang Po replied, "Senior wants to preserve the line of the Mountain Men."

Mountain Man Yanzhi said, "I have already done all I can. I presume that when I meet Grand Teacher after I die, he will not be able to accuse me of not doing anything."

Chen Changsheng was well-versed in the Daoist Canon, Xu Yourong had read a vast number of books, and Wang Po and Xiao Zhang were both incredibly experienced, but they only had a faint idea of the connection between the Eight Great Mountain Men and Grand Scholar Tungus.

Who was the Grand Teacher that Mountain Man Yanzhi spoke of? Could it really be Grand Scholar Tungus?

If this was the case, the Eight Great Mountain Men being Tungus's students was truly a secret that no one knew.

But why had he called Tungus 'Grand Teacher'? Because Tungus's title included the word 'grand'? Or was it because... the Eight Great Mountain Men also had a secondary teacher?

Chen Changsheng and the others thought of the rest of that rumor, their expressions shifting.

The most secretive of rumors said that the appearance of the Eight Great Mountain Men also had to do with the Pope of that generation.

Could it be that this Pope had also been their teacher?

"Yes, we have two teachers."

Mountain Man Yanzhi confirmed their theories.

All cultivators knew of the relationship between that Pope and Grand Scholar Tungus.

From Purification to Star Condensation, the countless laws and knowledge now regarded as common sense by the people of the world had come from the letters exchanged between these two.

In terms of authority or martial might, that Pope and Grand Scholar Tungus perhaps did not stand at the very top, but in terms of effect on history, they were unquestionably ranked in the top three. And in terms of intelligence and knowledge, this pair stood far above anyone else.

The most intelligent of geniuses often had the most insane of ideas.

Grand Scholar Tungus and that Pope had managed to secretly work together in an undertaking, managing to successfully hide it from the entire world.

Perhaps it was to confirm the possibility of eternal life, the ability of the soul to continue to exist, or to overcome the differences between races and exchange information, or maybe because they had just been bored.

They created the Eight Great Mountain Men.

Many of the details in this process were already unverifiable. The Eight Great Mountain Men themselves did not know. Only one fact was clear: they were not demons, nor were they humans, and they were not hybrids like Qi Jian. They were beings that existed on the line between the races, perhaps even existing above them.

Every existence required meaning, or perhaps one could say that existence would seek out meaning all on its own and grant it unto itself.

Grand Scholar Tungus passed from this world, followed by the Pope.

The Eight Great Mountain Men left their garden and entered the world.

They began to ponder this matter.

Given their intelligence, they could not understand the true thoughts of their teachers, and they certainly could not ponder the domains of eternal life and the soul.

In the end, they obtained one conclusion.

Their two teachers had created them to prove that the humans and demons could live together in peace, should live together in peace.

They were a symbol of peace.

Mountain Man Yanzhi said, "Our goal is a peaceful world. Before peace is finally realized, we at least hope that neither the Divine race nor the Human race will be too strong, causing the weaker side to be at risk of extinction. Thus, when one side is ascendant, we assist the other side."

Chen Changsheng said, "So you led the armies against Emperor Taizong but later on vanished."

Mountain Man Yanzhi affirmed, "Yes."

"Where were you when the demons were ascendant? And where were you in the siege of Luoyang?"

Xu Yourong suddenly spoke, her voice cold and impassive.

Mountain Man Yanzhi replied, "The Human race still had many experts then, so there was no worry of extinction."

Xu Yourong asked, "As long as there is no extermination but the humans are treated like livestock by the demons and harvested for food, none of you will care?"

Mountain Man Yanzhi was quiet for a while, then he said, "Before, I said that we read many human stories and saw many plays in Xuelao City. For the latter, Grand Teacher brought us to see the plays, while for the former, Second Teacher mailed them to us. In the end, the two are still somewhat different."

They had been born in Xuelao City and grown up in Xuelao City, so they naturally felt a deeper sentiment for the demons.

And as time passed, their sense of belonging to the Human race became fainter and fainter, even though the human blood flowing through their bodies was no less diluted.

"So your existence has no meaning. To the demons, you are opportunists that sway with the wind. Probably both the old Demon Lord and the current Demon Lord were both incredibly wary of you. I even think that old Demon Lord probably killed a few of your members. And to the humans, you're no different from Black Robe. All of you are traitors."

Xu Yourong's voice was very calm, but her words were exceptionally lethal.

Wang Po and Xiao Zhang exchanged glances, not knowing what to say.

The truth had always been the most hurtful.

It was clear that Xu Yourong had accurately described the bitter

circumstances of the Eight Great Mountain Men.

Mountain Man Yanzhi angrily said, "We swayed back and forth, but that does not mean that we are traitors! Do not mention us in the same breath as Black Robe!"

Xu Yourong suddenly changed the topic. Pointing north, she asked, "Just what's over there in the darkness?"

Mountain Man Yanzhi froze, and then said, "Is there any need to mention it at this time?"

The corners of Xu Yourong's lips perked upward as she jeered, "For the demons to still be engaged in civil war at this time, it would go against the heavens for this race to not die off."

Mountain Man Yanzhi had a rather nasty expression.

"This is clearly Black Robe's scheme, so why do you need to cover for him?"

Xu Yourong asked him, "Is it the Demon Commander?"

After a little hesitation, Mountain Man Yanzhi nodded.

Xu Yourong nodded back and said, "I have nothing else I want to ask."

Only now did Wang Po understand what she was doing, for which he felt deep admiration.

He turned to Mountain Man Yanzhi and said, "It's best if Senior has them travel farther away."

He was referring to Mountain Men Jingbo and Yichun.

The fires of war were callous and were certain to engulf the entire continent. Even the Great Western Continent might not be able to escape.

Mountain Man Yanzhi said, "They will go to the distant Abyssal Sea."

The curtain had truly dropped on the story of the Eight Great

Mountain Men.

The historic mission they had bestowed upon themselves had already come to an end.

These words from Mountain Man Yanzhi were an admission of defeat.

Not tonight's defeat, but the defeat of the entire Demon race.

Before the war had even begun, he had admitted defeat.

To defeat a mountain, one first had to break its momentum.

Xiao Zhang had done this.

A mountain's true power lay in its momentum.

The difference between high and low cliffs, the undulations and bends of its ridges—these were all part of its momentum.

The momentum of the world, on the other hand, was based on the fortune of the races that lived in it.

Over the last one thousand years, the Human race's fortune had gradually been improving.

Emperor Taizong, Emperor Xian, and the Tianhai Divine Empress could all be described as wise sovereigns of their generations.

Most importantly, they had all died when they should have died, leaving their good legacies to the Great Zhou Dynasty.

Such legacies included the alliance with the Demi-human race, the establishment of Snowhold Pass, Blue Pass, and the rest of the seventeen strongholds, and the confluence of the north and south.

The current emperor was also a wise sovereign.

He remained deep in the palace yet could rule the world. For ten-some years, the weather had been fair, the oceans calm, the rivers clear. Could one really think that this was all because the Heavenly Dao was taking pity on the Human race?

Compared to the Human race, the Demon race's fortune over the last one thousand years had been disastrous.

The abilities of the previous Demon Lord were truly perfect. He was the true king of superb talent and bold vision, a mighty sovereign.

If only he had died a little earlier.

It was a pity that this Demon Lord had lived too long.

He was older than Emperor Taizong, was even fit to be called Emperor Taizu's brother.

Yet even when Emperor Taizu had died, Emperor Taizong had died, and Emperor Xian had died, he did not die. He was not willing to die.

Only flowing water could remain free of decay. The Demon Lord had ruled Xuelao City for too long, causing the entire Demon race to fall stagnant.

Even more frightening was that though the old Demon Lord's flesh had still lived, his mind had gradually begun to rot.

Perhaps because he had confronted death for too long, he lost all interest in ruling. He spent the vast majority of his time and energy on tempering his demon body and soul.

He wanted to cure his old wounds, wanted to enter the legendary Grand Liberation Realm. He wanted... to live forever and never die.

Thus, he had risked entering Mount Han to eat Chen Changsheng. Thus, he had fallen into Shang Xingzhou's trap and fought a world-shaking battle with the White Emperor on the snowy plains, leaving him heavily injured. Thus, he had revealed a weakness, been overthrown by Black Robe and the Demon Commander, and been forced into the abyss by his own son.

In the final analysis, his ultimate death in the snowy mountains

was solely because he had wanted too much to live.

As was said a moment ago, it was a pity, truly a great pity, but he had still died late.

If, like Emperor Taizong, he had died a little earlier, the upper level of the Demon race would have naturally changed generations. Even if they did weaken, the time of their revival would have come a little earlier.

In the end, it was all about fate.

This was the Demon Lord's fate and also the Demon race's fate.

Tonight was the Demon race's final chance. The Eight Great Mountain Men had wanted to defy the heavens and change fate, but they had failed.

Thus, the momentum of the world was decided, as was the momentum of the Demon race.

"Alas, the women, the women...."

"Alas, the elders, the elders..."

The starlight shining on Mountain Man Yanzhi's face made it ghastly white.

His lips were also white, opening and closing like a pile of snow about to collapse.

"The death of my Mount Yanzhi leaves me not one bit happy."

After saying this, he closed his eyes and died.

This saying originates from a Xiongnu lament that goes 'The death of my Mount Qilian leaves the herds without a place to breathe. The death of my Mount Yanzhi leaves the women without makeup to wear'. The Xiongnu were a confederacy of steppe tribes that lived to the north of China. They were often in conflict with the Han Dynasty and fought several wars. One of the regions the two fought over was the Hexi Corridor, which formed a part of the North Silk Road. The Qilian Mountains formed the southern wall

of the Hexi Corridor, with Mount Yanzhi being one of these mountains. During the Han-Xiongnu wars, the Han general Huo Qubing led a force of ten thousand cavalry and dealt a devastating blow from to the Xiongnu kingdoms, capturing the Hexi Corridor. This loss was the first of several major defeats to the Xiongnu, and the Xiongnu never were able to regain control of the Hexi corridor.

Chapter 1130 – The Twenty-Ninth Night

Clear light rained down as Xu Yourong used the Sacred Light technique to treat Chen Changsheng's wounds.

Afterward, Chen Changsheng used his needles to open up Xiao Zhang's meridians and fed him a pill that could help nourish his blood.

Not only did Xiao Zhang not thank him, he was quite unsatisfied, asking, "What about the Cinnabar Pill? Why aren't you giving me one to try?"

Spearheaded by An Hua, the Li Palace priests and those fervent believers had let the entire continent know the origins and refining process of the Cinnabar Pill.

This extremely precious and incredibly mystical pill was refined from the Pope's sacred blood.

Xiao Zhang also knew of this, though he didn't much care. He only thought, it's not like it's a big deal for me to eat one of your pills.

Chen Changsheng explained, "The bottle of pills I refined a few days ago has already been sent to the Mount Song Army headquarters. If you want to eat one, you'll have to wait for ten-some days."

The war had still not started and Xiao Zhang was very important to the Human race, so he didn't mind giving him one.

But Xu Yourong did mind. Perhaps it was because her heart ached for Chen Changsheng, or perhaps it was because the blood in Chen Changsheng's body was mixed with her blood and impossible to separate.

To put it another way, the Cinnabar Pill was half his, but it was also half hers, so for what reason did he alone have the final say?

She looked at Xiao Zhang and asked, "You're sure you want to eat it?"

While recalling the conversation she had just had with Mountain Man Yanzhi, Xiao Zhang suddenly felt a little cold and said, "Just treat it like I was farting."

Wang Po was in a fine mood as he watched this sight and laughed.

Xiao Zhang sneered, "Your fart's rather loud."

Chen Changsheng asked, "How did you come to be here?"

This was also a question that Xu Yourong and Xiao Zhang wanted to ask.

Although the Demon Commander never appeared in the end, Black Robe's plan itself was practically flawless.

Ten-some days had passed since Xiao Zhang had sent news through the Bear tribe and the demons began to pursue him.

But Chen Changsheng had received the news only two days ago.

Divine Domain experts like Mao Qiuyu and the Prince of Xiang needed to directly confront the pressure of the Demon race's army, and they also simply had no idea of this affair.

Xiao Zhang's breakthrough tonight had probably been sensed already by Mao Qiuyu, the Prince of Xiang, and the others.

But they were all too far away. Not even an expert of the Divine Domain would have been able to make it, not unless Bie Yanghong came back to life.

The most fundamental reason still rested on the word 'trust'.

Xiao Zhang did not like this world, so he naturally did not trust it.

In his eyes, people like Mao Qiuyu and the Prince of Xiang were even more dangerous than the demon experts.

It was just like the incident with Su Li.

It was still Chen Changsheng.

Everything had happened too quickly, leaving him no time to think.

Even though he knew that this might be a trap laid by the Demon race, he still had to force his way in.

Why had Wang Po appeared?

That he had left White Emperor City while Xu Yourong had left Holy Maiden Peak and come to this grassland was because they possessed a special means of communication and had the fastest means of transportation.

Wang Po's presence could only mean that he had known of the news in advance.

Who had told him?

"On the night of the day before yesterday, the Red Cloud Qilin came to Scholartree Manor with a letter."

Wang Po added, "The letter came from Luoyang."

The Monastery of Eternal Spring was in Luoyang.

Chen Changsheng looked at Wang Po.

Wang Po nodded.

Chen Changsheng was somewhat shocked as he wondered, how did Master know of the demons' plans ahead of time?

"There's something wrong with Black Robe," Xu Yourong said.

Her final conversation with Mountain Man Yanzhi had been precisely so that she could confirm this point.

"It now looks like there's something wrong with your master as well. If you want to clarify what this problem is, you might have to go to Luoyang."

The dust had already settled while the winds were gradually beginning to still. A smear of white could be seen peeking out from the horizon.

The signs of dawn meant that it was almost daytime.

Wang Po asked Xiao Zhang, "Do you want to leave with me?"

The white paper rustled as Xiao Zhang panted, apparently rather angry.

"I'm no worse than you right now, so is your concern necessary?"

Wang Po had truly heard too much of this unreasonable talk over the last several decades. He laughed, not taking the comment to heart.

As expected, Xiao Zhang was still arrogant and irritable with the most awful of temperaments.

Chen Changsheng was very curious as to how someone with this sort of personality had thought about asking him for help.

The reason Xiao Zhang gave was extremely simple, yet so powerful that it was even rather touching.

"I've cultivated several decades and can say without shame that I've been extremely diligent. So motivated am I that I wasn't even afraid of walking the path to madness. Finally, I reached my current state and saw a chance of crossing that threshold. How great of a pity would it be to die at this moment? And if I have to die, I should at least get the chance to cross to that side and get a glance at the scenery first.

"Moreover, if it wasn't possible for me to cross that threshold, I don't mind a tragic death in battle on the snowy plains, but now it looks like the humans are about to win and I'm about to enter the Divine Domain, which means I'm useful. How can I just randomly die? I have to live life more carefully."

If he did cross that threshold, all his intense loves and hates, his

doubts of the world, his arrogance and unrestrained behavior, would all have to be temporarily put aside.

Because he had to survive, survive for the sake of the Human race. To put it another way, he was no longer himself, or at least not only himself.

Wang Po was somewhat comforted, Chen Changsheng was a little emotional, and Xu Yourong was rather quiet as she thought, does the sight behind that threshold really have such a big influence on cultivators?

The morning winds were somewhat cool, yet the weather was rather warm. It was precisely this warmth that made Xiao Zhang unhappy.

He liked being revered and feared, disliked being admired and liked.

He had gotten used to a cold life. In order to avoid the conversation becoming warm and bright, he somewhat awkwardly changed the subject.

"Your Unity Sword Art is truly extraordinary."

Xiao Zhang was looking at Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

Although he was awkwardly changing the subject, one could tell from his serious expression that he was being sincere.

The Unity Sword Art referred to Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong's harmonious combination of swords, but it was not only that. It also included their teamwork in their fight against Mountain Man Yanzhi.

This sort of flawless and natural shifting of roles required the two people to have their minds completely connected.

The entire world knew that Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong were Daoist companions, but also knew that completely synchronizing two minds was one of the hardest feats in the world.

Even a mother and son, comrades who had shared life and death on the battlefield, or a couple that had been married for many years would find it very difficult to do, so why could they do it?

Chen Changsheng was rather happy to receive such praise from Xiao Zhang, but he also felt a little worried.

Firstly, this was not an easy question to answer, and secondly, Yourong seemed to be in a rather bad mood tonight and he was worried that an inappropriate answer would make it worse.

Xiao Zhang's gaze moved back and forth between him and Xu Yourong, and he finally asked, "Is there a problem between the two of you?"

.....

.....

"Is there a problem between the two of you?"

The starlight falling in the courtyard made the gray bricks silver and the light yellow sleeves even lighter.

Qi Jian was somewhat uneasy as she looked at Zhexiu standing beyond the fence, her hands tightly clenching her sleeves.

In the past, he would have been staring at the silver bricks, because what he liked the most was silver.

Otherwise, he should have been staring at her, because he loved to see her dress, loved to see her.

Just when did everything start to change?

Qi Jian had a rather desolate expression as she gazed at Zhexiu's back.

Zhexiu had no intention of turning around, nor did he directly answer the question.

"There's no need to blindly speculate. Go to sleep. I'll come back in a while."

.....

.....

The courtyard, in the valley behind a green gorge, had its back to a mountain while a plain of grass stretched out in front of it. In the starlight, it looked like a beautiful rug.

A small path led deep into the plain, stamped out by people's feet. It was a white thread that had been dropped on the rug.

Zhexiu had spent many years here. Although he had still not married Qi Jian, all of Mount Li had already given their tacit approval.

But nobody had been able to get in touch with Su Li, causing the entire affair to be delayed for now.

Zhexiu was still his taciturn self, but the lines on his face had softened, and his sleeves and pantlegs were no longer as short.

Every several days, he would go to the outlying mountains to listen to the Mount Li Sword Sect Master's sword music. His Tide Rush of Blood had greatly improved. Although it was still not cured, it had already been several years since it had broken out.

His cultivation was also advancing rapidly. In the early spring, the peach trees growing beyond the fence of the courtyard had bloomed in one night as he finally reached the peak of Star Condensation.

Coupled with the abnormal strength granted to him by the mixture of human and wolf blood in his veins, he was truly a terrifying fighting force. Guan Feibai and Liang Banhu were no longer a match for him and Bai Cai could not even last three moves. He could even fight equally with the elders of the Sword Hall.

In order to travel from Mount Li to this plain, one needed to traverse the sword path in the green gorge. In the day, a few elders and some disciples would come to this plain to practice with their

swords. At night, the plain became quiet and deserted, the only people being him, Qi Jian, and that girl living on the large tree deep within the plain.

As he gazed at the distant tree, Zhexiu's eyes squinted, his expression turning sharp.

For such a large tree to grow in this flat plain was in itself very strange.

This tree's trunk was so thick that ten-some people would be needed to fully embrace it. Its surface was very smooth as if it had no bark. Few branches grew from it and the number of leaves it had was completely out of place with the size of the tree. Only at its highest point would it seem somewhat verdant. It looked rather bare, and observed from a distance, it really did look like a sword.

Walking beneath the tree, Zhexiu looked up.

"You've come?"

"You've come!"

Two voices rang out as if sensing his gaze.

The two voices seemed to ring out in unison, but the difference between them was so stark that it was impossible to think that the same person had said them.

One was clear and melodious, bursting with energy and delight.

The other voice was extremely soft and sticky and just slightly hoarse. It sounded very lazy.

In a light breeze and a stream of green light, two women appeared at Zhexiu's side.

Both women were very beautiful, but they had completely different attires and expressions.

One woman was dressed in a simple and long gown, her body clothed so tightly that nothing was revealed. She wore no makeup, her clear and elegant face exposed to the world unadorned. She

looked at Zhexiu with wide-open eyes, her expression cute and innocent, but her hands were carefully gripping Zhexiu's sleeve.

The other woman was dressed in red, her black hair draped behind her, still a little wet. Her face was as beautiful as a painting, and when she fluttered her lashes, she seemed to communicate all sorts of amorous feelings. She had already buried herself in Zhexiu's bosom, her soft breasts unintentionally pressed against Zhexiu's upper arm.

One was moving while the other was tempting. One was pure while the other was charming. Any other man would find it very hard to resist this kind of allure.

Zhexiu had no reaction, not even any of the unhappiness or disgust that a virtuous gentleman might have shown.

He was not a virtuous gentleman, and he knew these two women, knew that their beauty was nothing but, as they were not actual existences. They were spiritual beings.

They were Nanke's two wings, and their names were Hua Cui and Ning Qiu.

In the snowy mountains, Nanke had been heavily injured and become mentally disabled. Her two wings vanished, and when they did appear, they could not take human form.

It was only on a certain night not too long ago that they finally reappeared, and it was only starting from that night that Zhexiu began to often visit the large tree.

Wings of light silently flapped in the air as Hua Cui and Ning Qiu flew Zhexiu up.

In Zhexiu's eyes, the smooth surface of the tree was the ever-receding surface of a road.

After several dozen zhang, more branches appeared, as well as leaves. More and more green could be seen as his surroundings gave off a verdant aura.

Someone had built a room on the tree, and it even had a terrace about three feet wide in front of it. By standing on the terrace, one could watch the magnificent sight of the sun setting over the plain.

Zhexiu entered the room.

Nanke was crouched on the floor, her left hand hugging her knees while her head rested on them. Her right hand held a tree branch and was currently scribbling on the floor.

She raised her head at the footsteps and said to Zhexiu, "You've come."

This was a descriptive phrase, devoid of emotion. Just like her voice, it was flat and lacking any sort of fluctuation.

The space between her eyes was still rather wide and her expression was still rather dull, but their condition had greatly improved.

The Just Sword's Clear Music of the Mount Li Sword Sect Master was truly formidable. It had been of massive help to both Zhexiu's Tide Rush of Blood and Nanke's condition.

Zhexiu did not engage in pleasantries with her. He immediately asked, "Have you finished thinking?"

Such forthrightness made him seem stiff and inarticulate, but it could also be understood as tough.

Nanke said, "You've asked me for twenty-nine nights straight now."

Zhexiu said, "You still have one day."

Nanke said, "I still haven't finished thinking."

Zhexiu was quiet for a while, then he declared, "If you still give this answer tomorrow, I will kill you."

Nanke said, "If you're wary of me, you should tell the people of the Mount Li Sword Sect and work together with them to kill me."

What need is there to ask me this question every night?"

Yes, she was already awake. It had been twenty-nine days ago.

It was also on that night that Nanke's two wings reappeared on the plain, bringing with them an eerily beautiful green light.

Zhexiu saw that green light and knew what had happened, so he came to the tree and asked her a question.

And tonight, Nanke had still not given the answer he wanted.

"Chen Changsheng entrusted you to me, so I have the duty of taking care of you. I don't want you to die."

Zhexiu added, "And you're also her relative. If you die in Mount Li, she will probably be very sad."

Nanke placed the branch on the floor and said, "But you'll still kill me in the end."

Zhexiu offered, "You can stay here."

This was the answer he wanted to hear from Nanke.

Nanke calmly gazed at the dark plain and said, "The Human race is about to begin the war. I have to go back."

Although her grudge against the current Demon Lord was as deep as the ocean, she was still a Demon Princess.

"When you return to Xuelao City, you will be the enemy."

Zhexiu finished, "So I will not let you leave, even if I have to kill you."

Nanke said, "I want to think some more."

Her voice was still flat, devoid of fluctuation or emotion.

Zhexiu quietly stared at her. Suddenly, he said, "Okay."

After saying this, he walked to the door.

The branch on the floor silently and abruptly turned black and then into ash.

On the terrace outside, two streams of green light were slowly shifting, prepared to attack at any time.

As she watched Zhexiu move to leave, Nanke's face had no emotion. It was like she was looking at a corpse.

Chapter 1131 – A Know-Nothing Parting

Nanke had no hope that her two maids could cause Zhexiu any trouble.

She only needed her two maids to attack.

That branch that had silently burned to ash contained a fierce poison, and it had also activated a killing array on the terrace.

She had also prepared twenty-nine plans for Zhexiu.

This was an ambush that she had prepared for a very long time.

Nanke's capabilities meant that this ambush was flawless. Every particular was perfect.

As long as Zhexiu had not prepared beforehand, he would definitely be defeated and then killed by her.

Even though he was now a peak Star Condensation expert, even though he had been publicly acknowledged ever since he was a child as a master in fighting.

Had Zhexiu expected Nanke to suddenly attack him?

The front of his shoes burst apart, revealing sharp and bright claws.

His body suddenly grew larger while his face and hands bristled with fur.

In an extremely short amount of time, his Qi grew several times stronger.

Without even walking out of the room, he had entered berserk metamorphosis. Then, gathering all his strength, he exploded toward Nanke!

How had he seen through her plans?

Nanke had a somewhat perplexed expression as she watched those gleaming claws slice through the air.

Those emotions were immediately expelled, her eyes turning as bright as the Moon in the snowy night.

Moonlight shone on the leaves outside the room, instantly dying them green.

Two streams of light penetrated through the wall and came behind her, forming into two wings of light.

In the narrow room, Nanke transformed into a blur. Through ten-some instantaneous movements, she managed to avoid Zhexiu's attack.

The room simply could not endure this. In a burst of snaps and creaks, it shattered into thousands of pieces that rained down to the ground.

The leaves on the branches also rustled down, much like rain.

In this downpour of leaves and wood shards, two figures descended.

Two heavy thuds resounded through the air as they crashed to the ground, sending dirt flying.

Zhexiu's clothes were torn all over, each cut extremely smooth and tinged with dark green.

Some of the cuts were deeper than the rest and had blood surging out. The red mixing with green looked both strange and disgusting.

The Peacock Plume was Nanke's most terrifying weapon. Not even Chen Changsheng's skin, toughened through perfect Purification and a bath of dragon blood, could fully stop it, and neither could Zhexiu.

Zhexiu's eyes were already red because of the berserk metamorphosis, but now they were dirt-yellow, probably because he had been poisoned.

Nanke's wounds were even worse. A massive tear had been made

on her left wing and a deep wound had been left on her neck. The blood flowing out, however, was black.

"How did you know that I would move tonight?"

Nanke had decided to leave long ago. Even if she waited until tomorrow, the result would be the same.

Tomorrow, Zhexiu would tell the Mount Li Sword Sect, and she had no confidence in breaking through Mount Li's Myriad Sword Array.

Compared to tomorrow, it was far better to act first today.

"I didn't know that you would move today."

Zhexiu said, "I was intending to strike and kill you."

It was the same reasoning.

He knew that Nanke would not change her mind, so he might as well bring the matter to a close today.

Nanke had been brought to Mount Li by Chen Changsheng, making this an internal matter of the Orthodox Academy. He did not want to involve the Mount Li Sword Sect in it.

"Your poison cannot kill me."

Nanke rubbed the blood on her neck and licked her fingers.

The most poisonous being in the world was the Surpassing Bird.

The Surpassing Bird was the Peacock.

She was the Peacock.

Zhexiu replied, "Although your poison is formidable, it's also very difficult for it to kill me."

Back in the Garden of Zhou, he had been poisoned by Nanke and gone blind. With Qi Jian on his back, he ran around the Plains of the Unsetting Sun.

After leaving the Garden of Zhou, he was sent into Zhou Prison,

where the poison remained. Only after he was taken back to the Orthodox Academy by Chen Changsheng and Tang Thirty-Six, and spent an extremely long period of convalescence, was it finally cured.

Nanke's poison had spent such a long time in his body that he had actually developed resistance to it.

This naturally had to do with his unique constitution.

Nanke said, "I didn't expect that you would launch a sneak attack on me."

Zhexiu replied, "I'm a hunter."

When he was very young, he had been driven out of the Wolf tribe. Forced to live out a bitter life on the snowy plains, he lived by hunting monsters and demons.

He fought so that he could live, a goal that he would accomplish through any means.

When he needed to kill his foe, he would never show mercy or kindness.

Nanke pondered this, finally saying, "It's been too long, so I've somewhat forgotten."

Zhexiu agreed, "Yes, we've all lived in this place for too long."

This place was not the cruel and bloody snowbound land of the demons where one had to fight for their life the moment they opened their eyes.

This was the warm and comfortable plain of the south. The sword glows from Mount Li were mostly meant for probing, not for killing.

They had lived here for many years and almost forgotten about many things.

Zhexiu added, "I'm very regretful."

That you're not willing to continue living here with everyone else truly leaves me very regretful.

That I have to kill also makes me very regretful.

The Peacock Plume and its green glow once more clashed with the sharp wolf claws.

A sword glow came from the west, standing between them. It was by no means an awe-inspiring sword intent, but it was clear as water. It was both soft and hard to break and seemed like it could persist forever.

A languid voice came with it.

"This being the case, why add to your regrets?"

Zhexiu and Nanke were both gravely wounded at the moment, but there were very few people that could block them both with a single sword.

The Mount Li Sword Sect had many experts, but only eight or nine of them were capable of such a feat, and with such a lazy voice, it could only be Qiushan Jun.

Gou Hanshi had come. Liang Banhu, Guan Feibai, and Bai Cai had come. Qi Jian had also come.

She said in anguish to Nanke, "Aunt, can't you just stay?"

"I was born there. I grew up there. I walked there and I flew there. I was only two streets away from the Moon."

Nanke said, "Now, that place is about to be destroyed by you humans. I have to do something for it."

The wind rustled the leaves on the ground, but this only seemed to make things feel quieter.

After some time, Qiushan Jun spoke once more.

"Goodbye then. I won't send you off."

Nanke was not surprised, nor did she thank him. She said to

Qiushan Jun, Gou Hanshi, and the others, "All of you will go there, so I'll meet you then."

That place was naturally Xuelao City.

In the last few years, they had been comrades who had sat around bonfires and cooked meat, sung songs, danced, and compared swords. When they next met, they would be enemies to the bitter end.

This was something worthy of being sorrowful about, but why did it also feel so uninteresting?

Qiushan Jun sighed as he watched that stream of light vanish into the darkness. Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw Zhexiu's complexion and he couldn't help but frown.

His junior sister's husband was fine in everything else. It was just his nature that was too cold.

"Chen Changsheng sent a letter that said that if Nanke insisted on leaving, we shouldn't stop her."

Gou Hanshi added, "He did not say how he knew that Nanke had awakened."

In his view, Nanke was a trouble that Chen Changsheng had brought to Mount Li. Since Chen Changsheng had made arrangements, Zhexiu had no reason to object.

"Do you want to guess how many black-armored cavalry Nanke will poison to death in the future?"

Zhexiu did not hold the same view as Gou Hanshi, and he even highly disapproved of Chen Changsheng's actions.

"The spirit, openness, and friendship that you and Chen Changsheng want to display has always been idiocy in my eyes."

Guan Feibai sneered, "What do you know?"

"With regards to war, all of you truly know nothing at all."

With this impassive remark, Zhexiu turned and left.

Qi Jian ran after him.

Chapter 1132 – Cong Province

What exactly was war?

Many disciples of Mount Li had rendered services on the frontlines, had participated in the war against the demons.

But in terms of understanding of war, there truly was no one present that could compare to Zhexiu.

Guan Feibai and the others looked to Qiushan Jun.

Whether in cultivation or in life, whenever they encountered some unsolvable question, they would seek the instruction of their eldest brother. This was a habit they had developed over many years.

Qiushan Jun said, "Don't look at me. I also don't know, and I don't plan to know either."

Guan Feibai and the others were rather surprised while Gou Hanshi was deeply shocked. He had understood Qiushan Jun's hidden meaning.

Before leaving, Nanke had said that she would meet everybody in that place.

Senior Brother, are you... not intending to go?

.....

.....

As the morning sun rose, the true appearance of the grassland was revealed. The wounds left by the crushing pressure of the mountain ranges extended for several dozen li and looked rather spectacular.

A massive kite flew on the winds in the distance. As for where this kite had gone last night and how Xiao Zhang had managed to produce it again, nobody knew. Its curiosity piqued, the White Crane flew off in pursuit. It followed the kite for ten-some li before

Xiao Zhang under the kite could no longer stand being awkwardly stared at and cursed, causing Xu Yourong to call the White Crane back.

Wang Po also prepared to leave, not chatting very much with Chen Changsheng. Just like Xiao Zhang, he was simple and straightforward, because everyone knew that they would meet again soon.

He left the Red Cloud Qilin behind, not saying if this was his intention or the intention of the individual in Luoyang. Chen Changsheng guessed that it was the latter.

The grass grew quickly in the warmth of the spring sun. Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong walked deeper into the grassland and discovered a few traces left behind by the Elves.

Back in the Garden of Zhou, he had believed her to be a young Elf girl who had wholeheartedly devoted herself to the revival of her homeland. Later on, when he was returning the swords of the Garden of Zhou to the various sects of the world, the Pope asked if he wanted any reward. He had requested this grassland with the intent of helping her complete her dying wish.

It was only later on that he realized that this had been a misunderstanding, and he also learned that the Elf race had traveled to the distant Great Western Continent with no thought of returning to the Eastern Continent.

This grassland became his and Xu Yourong's property.

From a certain perspective, this grassland was a physical symbol of their love. One could also think of it as a betrothal gift.

When they reached the deepest part of the grassland, Chen Changsheng spread his left arm out in the sunlight. A black pearl of stone sat in his palm.

Winds howled, thunder rumbled, and a faint stench filled the air as the sun was obscured and the world went dark.

Tens of thousands of monsters appeared on the grassland, as dense as a tide.

These monsters famed for their cruelty and fighting power were unexpectedly disciplined. They obediently prostrated on the ground, not even daring to breathe too loudly.

These monsters came from the Garden of Zhou.

Based on the agreement these monsters had reached with Chen Changsheng, those monsters willing to leave the Garden of Zhou had now all been sent by him to the grassland of the Elf race.

These monsters accounted for one-third of the monsters living in the Garden of Zhou.

The Monster Bull and the Mountain-toppling Fiend did not come out. They had grown used to their lives in the Plains of the Unsetting Sun. Moreover, they had experienced the cruelties of the real world several centuries ago and had no interest in it now.

The Earth Monkey came out again. It kneeled at the very front of the monster herd, the place closest to Chen Changsheng, and kissed the dirt at his feet.

"Remember to not leave this grassland."

Chen Changsheng reminded the Earth Monkey.

This was a condition of their agreement.

This grassland that once belonged to the Elves was exceptionally vast and was bordered by two extremely long mountain ranges. If not for the insufferable winters and the overly bloody atmosphere, it would have never been so deserted. But to these monsters, these were all challenges that could be overcome.

"Have you never thought about the problem that will be posed if the monsters continue to multiply and add to their numbers?"

Xu Yourong looked around at the monsters in the grassland with a very mixed expression.

"That's a matter for several thousand years later. There's no need to think of a problem so far away."

Chen Changsheng thought some more and added, "I probably won't be able to live until then."

Xu Yourong said, "It's precisely because you'll be dead then that you need to think about this problem. Besides you, these monsters won't listen to the order of any human."

Chen Changsheng sighed, "Your words are truly too reasonable."

Xu Yourong proposed, "If these monsters were used to fight against the Demon race's wolf cavalry, the results should be astounding."

Chen Changsheng had found himself speechless and rather rueful to the previous question, but he earnestly responded to this one.

"This is a war between us and the demons. There's no reason for them to participate, and it's very dangerous."

Xu Yourong asked, "Should we not use our entire strength in the war against the demons?"

Chen Changsheng said, "I don't think so. It's fine as long as we do our best."

Last night, Mountain Man Yanzhi had stopped Mountain Men Jingbo and Yichun from taking revenge for him and had them leave. Afterward, he had said something.

He had done his best for the demons and could see his teacher with pride after his death, so he didn't need to do anything else.

Chen Changsheng had never thought about whether he would have the pride to see his martial uncle or Archbishop Mei Lisha after he died. He only needed to think about whether what he did could convince himself.

Because he cultivated the Dao of following his heart.

The conclusion he obtained at the end was very similar to

Mountain Man Yanzhi's. It was fine as long as he did his best. As long as he truly did his best, his heart would be at peace.

How could one do their best? He could sacrifice his life, but he didn't need to sacrifice more than that.

Like altering the way of interaction in this world.

This was even more important than living.

Xu Yourong pondered this and said, "Even if this is what you really think, you shouldn't say it."

He was the Pope of the Human race. His every word and action would have massive influence over his fervent believers and could even alter the course of the war.

Chen Changsheng understood what she meant and sighed, "I can only say it front of you and the others."

As his status grew more and more esteemed, and his prestige climbed higher and higher, it grew increasingly inconvenient for him to speak of many things. For instance, he could no longer sit by Tang Thirty-Six on the great banyan tree, peeling off bark to throw at the fat koi in the lake and then having Xuanyuan Po stew ten blue lobsters for an hour in ginger and pepper before throwing them into the lake for the fish to feast on.

The rules of the Orthodox Academy clearly stated that fishing, catching, hitting, or any other action that could harm the fish was strictly forbidden, and Su Moyu sternly enforced these rules. Crucially, there were too many teachers and students watching, and ten blue lobsters were far too extravagant. Tang Thirty-Six could eat them, but as Pope, he could not.

Xu Yourong knew what he meant by 'others'.

Besides her, there were also those few people in the Orthodox Academy.

Even though those people had already left the Orthodox

Academy, returning to White Emperor City or going to Mount Li...

They were still Chen Changsheng's most trusted and most intimate friends.

"Tang Thirty-Six would probably only feel that it was a pity that we couldn't fully utilize these monsters, but Zhexiu would definitely be furious. In that wolf cub's view, anything that can help one kill the enemy should be carried out. Your action seems benevolent, impressive, and open-minded, but it's really just stupid."

Xu Yourong's face was covered in derision.

It was still as beautiful as a painting.

"Perhaps."

Chen Changsheng bitterly smiled, "I feel like you think the same."

Xu Yourong ignored him and began to walk out of the grassland.

Chen Changsheng suddenly thought of something and called the Earth Monkey back to tell it a few more things.

The Wolf tribe was currently living on the northeast corner of this grassland. Although they were still very far, he was worried that the two sides would meet in the future, so he warned the Earth Monkey.

That part of the grassland had been purchased by Zhexiu.

Three years ago, they had all spent the new-year holidays at Mount Li. Zhexiu had suddenly made this request, truly leaving the rest of them shocked.

Chen Changsheng had naturally been unwilling to accept the money, but Zhexiu had insisted.

He had taken out all the money he had saved up over the years. Although it was not necessarily enough to buy the entire grassland, the amount was still quite staggering. Even Tang Thirty-Six had

clicked his tongue in praise.

It was only then that everyone else found that when Zhexiu was expelled from the tribe as a child by the elders, quite a few women and youths had helped him in secret.

He wanted to repay this kindness by moving the tribe from the bitterly cold plains of snow to someplace better.

He had lived the last few years in excessive frugality, putting his life on the line to kill enemies and gain military achievements, all for the sake of saving enough money.

He had finally done it, and how could the elders of his tribe possibly dare to show him any disrespect now?

During the Grand Examination, Tang Thirty-Six had used half a roast chicken to bribe Zhexiu. In the following battle, Zhexiu had battled with Gou Hanshi, who was an entire cultivation realm above him, until the sun went down, playing a most critical role in Chen Changsheng's eventual victory. He had paid a most grievous price for this, as he had to be carried out on a stretcher, his body drenched in blood.

But when everyone was incredibly touched, he was only thinking about one thing: more money.

Chen Changsheng felt very emotional as he thought of those old times. He wondered about how Zhexiu was doing at Mount Li and knew that with the war between the humans and demons about to begin, Zhexiu would definitely go north. As for Nanke... The smile on his face slowly receded.

He was well aware of the state of Nanke's illness.

For many reasons, he had not much enjoyed spending time in the capital in the last few years. He would often travel around and had visited Mount Li many times.

Other than those people of the Orthodox Academy, only those fellows of the Mount Li Sword Sect dared to not treat him as Pope,

making him feel more comfortable.

Every year, his senior brother went to Luoyang to spend the new-year holidays. Other than one year when he went to Wenshui, he spent the other years going with Xu Yourong to Mount Li.

In these intervening years, he had gone to Mount Li around thirty times.

But every time Nanke saw him, her innocent face would break out into a sincere smile, then she would snatch at his sleeve and be unwilling to let go.

Even when he slept, she insisted on sleeping in the same room, even though she had to sleep on the floor, even though Xu Yourong had a very indifferent expression.

This was a habit she had formed during her time at Sloping Cliff Horse Farm, a matter which Qiushan Jun was well aware of.

Nanke was still a little dull-witted, but she still deeply trusted Chen Changsheng and found it very difficult to part with him.

She was keenly aware of who treated her the best.

Chen Changsheng truly did treat her very well.

The two really did seem like actual siblings.

Chen Changsheng was keenly aware of how her illness was doing. He had left her at Mount Li in the hopes that the Sect Master would be able to cure her.

He had been keeping a watchful eye on the progression of her illness. When visiting this year for the new year's festivities, he knew that her illness was on the verge of being cured.

This also meant that she was about to wake up.

When the time came, what would she do? And what should he do?

After a long period of contemplation, he left a letter with Gou

Hanshi and said that if Nanke showed signs of waking up, the letter should be opened.

Was that letter still unopened at this time?

.....

.....

The Red Cloud Qilin could cover several thousand li in a day, and the White Crane was the swiftest of immortal birds. If they were willing, Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong could fly straight back to the capital, but they decided to stop mid-journey. Perhaps it was because of that scarlet flame that had appeared in the sky in front of them.

This flame did not actually exist, but was condensed from countless strands of bloody Qi and killing intent. It was only visible to the eyes of those who had broken into the Divine Domain.

Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong were still a distance away from that threshold, but they had special statuses that made them Saints. Moreover, they carried the Heavenly Tome Monoliths with them, so they could sense it.

The wilderness was covered in people. From high in the sky, they looked like a dense collection of black ants, but this was not actually the case.

Fear appeared in the White Crane's eyes upon seeing that flame, but the Red Cloud Qilin became excited, flapping its wings even faster.

The Cong Province Army was currently assembled on the wasteland and was currently in the middle of intense training. A formidable Qi would occasionally rise from the army. Some of them were clearly the work of array masters while others came from cultivators skilled in controlling swords. Chen Changsheng even saw the Raging Inferno Shroud of the southern Setting Sun Sect in the southwest corner of the army.

This army was truly quite frightening. Even he and Xu Yourong would not be able to engage in a head-on confrontation with it.

Finally, Chen Changsheng saw the general at the front of this army.

This general had an extremely formidable Qi indicating that he was an expert of the upper Star Condensation Realm. He was presumably the Divine General of the Cong Province Army headquarters.

A gale blew through the wastes, causing the banners of the Great Zhou Army to flap in the wind and blowing about the clothes of the soldiers.

The general's sleeve flapped in the wind. He was missing an arm.

He was Xue He.

In the coup of the Mausoleum of Books, his elder brother Xue Xingchuan was poisoned to death by Zhou Tong. Afterward, the Imperial Court and the army engaged in a cruel purge, one which he naturally could not avoid. He was stripped of his post and jailed beneath the alley of the Northern Military Department. It was only on the day that Chen Changsheng, Mo Yu, and Zhexiu killed Zhou Tong that he was finally able to see the light of day.

Later on, the Li Palace stepped forward, resulting in his release, but he was forbidden from staying in the capital and forbidden from returning to Cong Province. The Imperial Court transferred him to Huang Province, where he became the deputy commander for the local militia. Fortunately, he had a good commanding officer, and he spent his days swimming in rivers, climbing mountains, and taking part in poetry competitions. Although it could not be called a particularly happy life, it was a rather peaceful one.

And then, a storm suddenly came, master and disciple fought within the Orthodox Academy, and the Maple Forest Pavilion

became a ruin. The situation was finally changed.

The emperor began to push forward a new government, allowing a group of officials from the previous government to reassume government positions. Xue He was among them, assigned to the post of Education Overseer of Star Seizer Academy.

In his three years at Star Seizer Academy, Xue He bitterly studied military strategy and had a large breakthrough in his cultivation. Without even knowing it, he reached the upper level of Star Condensation.

The emperor transferred him to Cong Province where he took on his elder brother's position, becoming Divine General of the Cong Province Army headquarters.

.....

.....

There was a dull thump.

Xue He kneeled, his knee smashing the hard gray stones.

His eyes were slightly red, his body trembling.

His composed and imposing air as he commanded an army of tens of thousands outside the city was no more.

The Younger Madam Xue and two sons of around eight or nine kneeled behind him.

The Xue clan was ruled strictly. The two young masters did not understand why their father had lost control of himself, but they did not dare ask.

The Younger Madam Xue had guessed at who this young man and woman were, so she was all too willing to kneel. She was only concerned that she was not being respectful enough.

Chapter 1133 – Xunyang

The reason for Xue He's agitation was not that Chen Changsheng had freed him from his bitter imprisonment and allowed him to return to official life. Rather, he was grateful that Chen Changsheng had buried his older brother's body, attended the funeral, taken care of his nephew and niece, and even safeguarded Cong Province City. With the passage of several years, the Cong Province Army headquarters had already regained the glory of Xue Xingchuan's days. That it could now be regarded as one of the most important of the Great Zhou's army headquarters, along with Snowhold Pass and Blue Pass, was because he had the assistance of Xue Xingchuan's old subordinates.

Chen Changsheng said, "There's no need for such courtesy. Please, rise."

Xue He knew his personality, so he rose and had his wife leave with the children.

Before leaving, the Younger Madam Xue nervously glanced at him and wondered, is there a need to prepare a banquet? Are the two Saints unhappy?

Xue He did not notice his wife's expression, as all his attention was focused on the Red Cloud Qilin led by Chen Changsheng.

"Someone wanted me to bring it to you in the hopes that in the near future, you can ride it into Xuelao City."

Chen Changsheng added, "On that day, I think that Divine General Xue Xingchuan would be extremely happy."

Xue He took the reins and said, "Rest easy, Your Holiness. I will definitely take very good care of it."

The Red Cloud Qilin was extremely intelligent. It had already recognized who he was and lowered its head to lightly touch his cheek.

Xue He was somewhat touched, but when he thought about how it was most likely the Emperor who requested the Pope to bring the Red Cloud Qilin over, he also felt uneasy.

He seriously declared to Chen Changsheng, "I only know that it was Your Holiness that gifted it to me."

There was only one meaning to these words: devoted loyalty.

It was also why he had his family come out to kowtow to Chen Changsheng.

Although it was the emperor that had let him take up the post of Divine General of the Cong Province Army headquarters, he was well aware of who the true benefactor of the Xue clan was.

The Xue clan followed Chen Changsheng.

Both the Xue clan of Cong Province and the Xue clan that lived on the Road of Peace in the capital.

As long as the Xue clan existed, as long as he still lived, the Cong Province Army would only follow the Li Palace.

Even if the Imperial Court and the Orthodoxy fell into hostilities again, he would immediately take his army of tens of thousands and stand behind Chen Changsheng.

Even if it seemed like the Emperor and Pope had a deep affection for each other, the bond between martial brothers surpassing that of blood brothers, making such a thing impossible... who could say what might happen in the future? When Emperor Taizu led his army out of Tianliang County, had those young princes imagined all the blood that would flow through the Hundred Herb Garden several decades on?

Chen Changsheng knew that Xue He was mistaken and said, "This is probably the will from Luoyang's side."

These words made Xue He fall silent for a very long time.

The eastern capital of Luoyang had been silent for all these years,

making not a single noise, but many eyes were still watching it.

Why? Because the Monastery of Eternal Spring was there.

Whenever anyone mentioned Luoyang now, if they appended nothing else to it, they were referring to the Monastery of Eternal Spring, referring to the elderly Daoist residing within its walls.

If the Red Cloud Qilin had truly been sent by the Monastery of Eternal Spring, the meaning was crystal-clear.

"This general does not dare to hold any sort of grudge."

Xue He spoke very slowly, his tone incredibly solemn.

Since he had made his decision, he did not want the Pope to think he was keeping anything from him.

Even though saying these words made him extremely unhappy and reluctant.

"When one thinks about things that are impossible to control, love and hate are among them. Moreover, you have a reason to hate, so who has the right to stop you from hating?"

Chen Changsheng added, "But before we break into Xuelao City, we might have to temporarily forget these things."

In this war, the Cong Province Army led by Xue He was naturally the main force.

That person had returned the Red Cloud Qilin without a word, but the deeper meaning was clear.

It was precisely the meaning of Chen Changsheng's words.

.....

.....

As the twilight deepened, Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong decided to not eat at the Divine General's estate, instead choosing to leave immediately.

Now, the two of them had to ride the crane together.

Such circumstances had taken place many times now, and the White Crane was already used to it, but it immediately sensed that something was different today.

The open country was boundless in the hazy dusk of twilight.

Xu Yourong attentively watched the scenery. When Chen Changsheng conversed with her, she would return every four or five of his sentences with one of hers, making her seem rather aloof.

The White Crane recalled Xiao Zhang's words and thought to itself, is there really something wrong between the two of them?

Even someone as slow as Chen Changsheng had noticed Xu Yourong's aloofness and knew that something really was off.

Unfortunately, he didn't know what the problem was or where the problem came from. He didn't even know how to start asking her what the problem was.

The cold wind assailing his face not only failed to clear his mind, it made it even more muddled.

The White Crane flew to the southwest, and in a short while, it entered Tianliang County.

The sight of this familiar wilderness and that familiar city made Chen Changsheng recall his long journey with Su Li. He couldn't suppress his nostalgia.

Following his orders, the White Crane landed in a forest outside the city. In their descent, Chen Changsheng noticed that the largest estate in the city was deserted, its main gate tightly shut. Bewildered, he wondered, did Liang Wangsun leave? Why is his estate completely empty?

The White Crane flew into the twilight as Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong emerged from the lush forest next to the road.

Xunyang City was an ancient city, but its southern gate looked

rather new. At the very least, it seemed to lack any ancient aura.

"That year, it was your teacher that blew open this city gate, giving Guan Xingke and Zhu Luo a terrible beating."

Chen Changsheng felt rather excited when he thought of those events, but he was also rather ashamed at his lack of storytelling talent. He thought to himself, if it was Tang Thirty-Six, he would definitely tell the story in a much more exciting fashion.

The story about the storm in Xunyang City had been spread throughout the entire continent ages ago. Xu Yourong had learned of all the details long ago and simply did not require Chen Changsheng's explanation.

A faint smile emerged on her lips as she looked at the city gate and thought of her teacher.

Chen Changsheng felt somewhat relieved, gratified that his arrangements had been correct.

Upon entering Xunyang City, they went straight to the Liang Estate.

The gate of the Liang Estate was tightly shut.

A sweep of their spiritual senses confirmed that no one was inside.

Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong glanced at each other in confusion. They thought to themselves, just what happened that caused Liang Wangsun to dismiss everyone in his estate?

They entered the estate, saw that famous imperial carriage, and then they found the letter left behind by Liang Wangsun.

Liang Wangsun had a powerful influence on the people and cultivators of the north. The palace had issued a decree several times inviting him to enter the court, but he had always refused.

Since he was a descendant of the previous Imperial clan, his hate for the Chen Imperial clan had burrowed into his bones, so he

could never be willing to help them.

They had come to Xunyang City to convince him. Back then, Liang Wangsun had come to the capital to help the Tianhai Divine Empress manage the Imperial Design, so he should have had a good impression of Xu Yourong.

But nobody expected Liang Wangsun to immediately take the old and young of the estate out of Xunyang City with him the moment he got news from the capital. He had not even been willing to meet them.

But Liang Wangsun had written everything very clearly in his letter: he could never help the Imperial Court, but if he was truly needed, he would naturally appear.

Just this sentence alone was enough, but he had also left a name on the letter.

Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong left the estate and came to the street.

Many soldiers hurriedly walked past them with dazed expressions on their faces.

The various armies of the provinces and counties were currently in the middle of redeployment, at the same time engaging in field training.

Logically speaking, they wouldn't be appearing on the battlefield, but nobody really knew how many people would die this time.

Even the Imperial Guard tasked with defending the Imperial Palace were preparing to mobilize to the north at any moment, so how could they be excluded?

Deaths on the battlefield were unavoidable, and the phrase 'One steps into the breach left by the fallen' was commonly cited.

Chen Changsheng understood that this was a necessity, but he still felt rather dazed.

For his views, tens of thousands of people were about to die.

At times, he would consider himself lucky that he was the Pope, not the Emperor, or else those decrees and conscription orders would all be passing through his hands.

And then he would realize that he was being very inconsiderate of his senior brother by thinking this way.

He knew that his senior brother would superbly carry out these matters, but just like him, his senior brother also did not like to do these things.

The street behind the Liang Estate was called Four Seasons' Green. It was the straightest street in the western part of Xunyang City, and no stores lined it, only two identical walls of gray stone.

The street was quiet, but music was coming from some courtyard, and it seemed like somebody was singing an opera.

Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong followed this sound. Crossing an alley, they came to the gate of an estate, with two rows of red lanterns hanging over it.

The lanterns were made with extremely red paper, the color so thick that the paper still seemed to be wet. The light of the tallow candles shining through seemed strikingly like blood.

Xu Yourong glanced at these lanterns, her thin brows creasing as she seemed to think of something.

The sound of singing was coming from within the estate, but nobody was there to stop Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong from walking in.

A vast stone plaza greeted them, paved with large and unpolished stones. It lacked any sort of refinement, and the addition of the blazing torches planted around it made the place seem rather like the wastes of a battlefield.

In front of them was a stage, and tallow candles as thick as arms

burned on the stage. The flames shone on the rear wall, which was pasted with white paper, and the resulting splendid white made it seem like daytime.

A man was performing an opera. He was dressed in a red dress and was adorned in gaudy makeup.

He did not use high-collared clothes to hide his throat, nor did he deliberately heighten his pitch. As he sang, his voice, both slightly hoarse and exquisite, was rather moving.

Without any warning, the singing stopped.

The man looked at Chen Changsheng at the back and asked, "What does Sir think about my opera?"

Not many people had come to see his opera tonight, only ten-some people. They sat scattered in front of the stage. Based on their dress and manner, they were probably all leading figures of Xunyang City. The question from the man on stage caused them all to turn around. Upon seeing Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong, they couldn't help but be shocked.

Liang Hongzhuang was performing an opera in his estate today to amuse himself. He had still invited the finest theater troupe from Lanling City, and he was still singing the famous 'Spring Night Melody', and he was still playing the part of that charming and pleasant bride. Just as the song began to crescendo, his brows flying and eyes gentle, he saw that young couple walk in from outside. He thought to himself, you're finally here.

"I've never listened to opera before, but I think it was rather excellent."

Chen Changsheng thought some more and added, "It seems to be a little different from the operas of the capital."

"When I was little, I went to Luling and learned opera there. They sing a little weirdly there, but it sounds very nice."

Liang Hongzhuang noted, "I hear that it's a singing style that

came from the Great Western Continent, though I don't know if that's true."

These leading figures of Xunyang City examined the appearances of Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong, especially the latter, and quickly guessed at who they were.

Tea tables fell to the ground and chairs toppled.

Led by the governor and archbishop of Xunyang City, the crowd solemnly bowed.

Chen Changsheng waved his hand and had them rise, but he also seemed to have no intention of speaking to them. Thus, the crowd respectfully stood to the side, not daring to speak.

"That was a matter from ten-some years ago, when countless people of the Liang Estate died. My father also died and Big Brother left home. I lived quite the life of suffering back then. Since the Imperial Court didn't like our clan, there was naturally no one that liked us, and with no elders to protect me, who would be polite with me? At the worst period, I didn't even have anything to eat, so I thought to myself that I had to find a way to make a living. Father liked to listen to opera and so did I. I was passionate about this line of work, so I decided to walk this path, though I had no other option than that at the time. You two went to the estate just now? Back then, even the estate had been occupied..."

The expressions of the leading figures of Xunyang City subtly shifted as they listened to Liang Hongzhuang. Would something happen tonight?

But then, Liang Hongzhuang was quiet for a very long time.

He had originally planned to say many things.

Those people who had taken advantage of that incident to seize the Liang Estate's authority and wealth were precisely these leading figures of Xunyang City standing before him.

If Liang Wangsun hadn't been so talented, becoming an expert of

the Proclamation of Liberation at an early age and developing a relationship with the palace, would these people have been willing to lower their heads and concede? Even so, these people still used the Imperial Court's wariness toward the Liang Estate and the Tianhai clan's authority to prevent the Liang Estate from taking revenge.

It was not these people who had actually occupied the Liang Estate. To prestigious figures like them, eating in such a manner was too unsightly.

When he thought about that chaotic sight that greeted him after he returned to the estate three years later, Liang Hongzhuang sighed.

He took a box from his sleeve and threw it to Chen Changsheng.

The box contained half the fortune of the Liang Estate and could serve as war funds.

"I want to drink wine."

Liang Hongzhuang suddenly said.

After a few moments, a middle-aged woman carrying a bowl of wine hurriedly walked onto stage.

Liang Hongzhuang took the bowl and emptied it. Then he cast it to the floor, where it shattered into powder.

He looked up at the sky, a look of indescribable contempt and tragedy on his face. As he walked down the stage, he kicked off his cloud shoes, threw away his head scarf, and walked into the darkness.

The woman anxiously called after him, "Third Young Master, where are you going?"

Chapter 1134 – Luoyang

Liang Wangsun would not participate in the war, at least at its start, but he had to make his stance known. Thus, he had left behind a sentence and a name.

That name represented half the fortune of the Liang Estate and the Star Condensation expert that was Liang Hongzhuang.

Through Mo Yu, Liang Wangsun had already received a military assignment from the Ministry of the Army. Liang Hongzhuang would be going to Blue Pass. He would indubitably become a general and he would also be left in a safer place on the battlefield. But generals had to experience hundreds of battles, and this war was bound to last for a long time. Who could guarantee that he would return alive?

Moreover, Liang Hongzhuang knew his own personality, and he was sure that once he went, it would be very difficult for him to come back alive.

This was what was meant by meeting death, but before that, he still had some unfulfilled desires. For example, certain people were still alive.

In these last few years, he had formed an excellent relationship with the governor and archbishop of Xunyang City.

Although he had always had a rather so-so relationship with Liang Wangsun, he was still a member of the Liang Estate, so the prestigious figures of Xunyang City had to give him some face.

All of it had been for this day.

Liang Hongzhuang had originally planned to kill all these people tonight.

He knew what these people liked and he had prepared it all: the tallow candles, painted walls, red lanterns, and the food.

And he had even used a large sum of money to hide several assassins who had once belonged to the Pavilion of Heavenly Secrets in the darkness.

Xu Yourong had sensed a flash of killing intent when glancing at the lanterns, causing her to crease her brows.

In the end, Liang Hongzhuang changed his mind. Even after a long time, no one knew why, and they would never be able to know.

On a future summer day, a battle to break out of an encirclement would take place on the plains, and he... he would die beneath a sky covered in stars.

.....

.....

Sitting by a table, Chen Changsheng looked at his face in the mirror. As he thought about the story that Liang Hongzhuang had not finished telling, he sighed.

A rustling came from behind him. He turned around and saw a graceful figure behind the cotton curtain, the flower designs on her underclothes faintly visible.

He hurriedly walked over and tidied up the blankets on the floor so that they wouldn't get in the way.

Xu Yourong got out of bed. After rinsing her mouth and washing her face, she walked over to the window, still in her unbuttoned underclothes, and used both hands to push open the window.

The morning wind blew in through the window, falling on her face and ruffling her moist black hair.

The spring sunlight came with it.

Spring filled the room.

Chen Changsheng was naturally reminded of that sight from many years ago.

It was precisely in this inn, on an equally bright and beautiful spring day.

He shouted out to all of Xunyang City that Mount Li's Junior Martial Uncle, Su Li, was right here.

A storm suddenly arrived and he was forced into battle after bloody battle.

There was no need for him to shout this today, and being with Xu Yourong was naturally much more pleasant than being with Su Li.

The most important difference was that humanity had been fractured at the time. There were the new and conservative factions of the Orthodoxy, the Tianhai Divine Empress and the Chen Imperial clan, and of course, the greatest one of all, the split between the north and south. Even someone as merciful as the Pope wanted nothing more than to kill Su Li, so how could anyone else resist?

Things were completely different now.

Luoyang had returned the Red Cloud Qilin to Cong Province of its own accord, so Xue He kept his silence.

The Liang Estate had moved out, but they had left behind half their fortune. Liang Hongzhuang had ultimately decided not to kill anyone, and went straight to Blue Pass.

The grudges still remained, as did the rifts, but they no longer mattered for much.

Now, the Human race had reached an unprecedented level of unification.

Everyone knew that the Great Zhou Dynasty was about to commence a northern expedition. After several hundred years, the Human race was about to attack the Demon race once more. The goal this time was clear: to complete the grand undertaking that Emperor Taizong's generation could not complete. They would assail Xuelao City and then utterly defeat and subdue the demons.

Before this sort of war, nothing else was important—not the private grudges from a thousand years ago or a conflict of ideals.

All so that the Human race could persist for ages to come.

Xu Yourong did not turn her head. She squinted her eyes as she gazed at the spring radiance over Xunyang City. She was like a rabbit that had just woken up.

"You spent so long in White Emperor City. How did the negotiations go?"

Last year at the winter solstice, the Orthodoxy's diplomatic mission left the capital to travel to the land of the demi-humans, tens of thousands of li away. The Pope traveled with it.

It was only the day before yesterday, late in the spring season, that Chen Changsheng flew back on the White Crane for Xiao Zhang's imminent return.

He had been away for a hundred-some days.

Chen Changsheng said, "Although it's said that everything has a precedent, it's still been several centuries. It's not hard to have the White Emperor agree to send allied forces, but the details are very troublesome."

Xu Yourong replied, "It seems like it's even more difficult than fishing in the Red River."

Her face was blank of emotion when she said this.

But anyone could tell what emotion she wanted to express.

Chen Changsheng was stupefied at her words. He vaguely understood why she had been so cold and indifferent since the day before yesterday, but he momentarily found himself unable to explain.

He abruptly recalled Tang Thirty-Six's lessons. His expression shifting, he shouted, "Look, there's a kite up there."

Xu Yourong arched her brows and looked up at the sky. She was

greeted by a clear blue sky and nothing more.

Chen Changsheng quickly stepped forward and hugged her from behind, his arms just managing to completely embrace her.

"I won't let go.

"The entire continent is so united, so how can we break apart?

"The confluence of the north and south and the unification of the church and court completely rely on us.

"Just follow me.

"Or maybe I'll follow you."

Her brows raised, Xu Yourong said nothing.

How was it that emotions of hate and resentment seemed so endlessly bashful beneath the dazzling spring radiance?

.....

.....

Morning rays and drizzling rain fell once more on the old earth, causing people to scatter in search of shelter.

Ten-some li away from the capital, visible in the distance, the party broke up. One went up the Luo River to the capital while the other headed for some place farther.

Farther from the capital was no other place in the continent but Luoyang.

Many years ago, on his journey from Xining Village to the capital, Chen Changsheng had passed by Luoyang, but he had not entered the city.

It was very difficult to live in Luoyang. The inns there were widely acknowledged as being very expensive.

This was Chen Changsheng's first time entering Luoyang, and also his first time entering the Monastery of Eternal Spring.

This was the first meeting in ten years with his master Shang Xingzhou.

After the battle in the Orthodox Academy, Shang Xingzhou had retreated to Luoyang. It had been ten years since he had left the grounds of the Monastery of Eternal Spring.

The past was the past, but it could not be treated like the wind. The Human race was united like it never was before, but the rifts were still there, spanning between certain people and certain matters.

The deepest and most important rift was naturally the one between Chen Changsheng and Shang Xingzhou.

Shang Xingzhou had not cared about government affairs for many years, but he was still alive, which meant that he represented a faction, a belief.

The Daoists of the Monastery of Eternal Spring did not attempt to interfere. They calmly relayed Chen Changsheng's request for a meeting.

Even though the master of their monastery had been killed by Liu Qing, who had been invited by Chen Changsheng, they still remained courteous to Chen Changsheng, expressing no resentment.

This lack of emotion, or perhaps lack of subjective awareness, was truly frightening.

It was probably only Daoists like these that could force Xiao Zhang into the snowy plains, right?

As Chen Changsheng silently thought, he received a response from within the monastery.

A young Daoist boy of six or seven years old ran out from the Monastery of Eternal Spring. Panting, he said, "The ancestor has said that he's not seeing guests today!"

Chen Changsheng pinched the blushing red cheeks of the young Daoist's snow-white face and smiled. "Tell the ancestor that it's about White Emperor City."

No one else came to stop him, so it seemed like Shang Xingzhou truly was very interested in what he had to say.

Fields were laid out all over the Monastery of Eternal Spring.

It was not rice being grown in the fields, and the pine trees planted along the ditches were quite nice to look at, but that didn't mean that these fields were meant for cultivating scenery.

A faint odor shrouded these fields. The several dozen temples in the monastery were raising medicinal herbs.

Led by the young Daoist boy, Chen Changsheng was brought to an herb field. He took up a hoe lying by a ditch and began to weed and prune.

Chapter 1135 – Respectful Praise

The sprinkling and misty drizzle gradually soaked Chen Changsheng's collar and cheeks.

The weeds and old leaves thrown near the ditch shone with pearls of dew and looked rather pleasing to the eye.

As the sun moved across the sky, he finished working the field. The Daoist boy appeared again and indicated that he should follow.

At the end of the seemingly boundless field of herbs were several lush hills. Winding through the hilly paths, he was greeted by a cloud of steam. Quite a few hot springs could be seen bubbling out from between pine and cypress trees.

Chen Changsheng found himself anticipating a dip in the hot springs. Just as he was prepared to untie his outer clothes, he saw a figure in the steam.

The pine and cypress maintained their vigor in the steam, but the most vigorous of all was the special moss growing on the rocks in the hot springs.

This moss had a rather yellow shade, one that could even be called golden. It was precisely Golden Cash Fur, a type of plant described in the pharmacopoeias as being exceedingly rare.

The figure in the steam was currently gathering the Golden Cash Fur. They were being exceptionally prudent, focusing all their attention on this task.

A sudden breeze scattered the steam, allowing him to clearly see the sight.

Though he was bent over, he still gave off the feeling that he was standing straight. His hair was already graying, but it was still combed as neatly as it was in the past.

Chen Changsheng bowed and then stood to the side.

As time passed, the sun climbed higher in the sky, and the mist scattered. The Golden Cash Fur began to recede all on its own, looking no different from ordinary moss.

Shang Xingzhou passed the herb basket to an attending Daoist priest. He then took a cup of clear water from the Daoist boy and took a sip, after which he walked to a pavilion and sat down.

Chen Changsheng walked to the pavilion.

Shang Xingzhou did not even glance at him, nor did he ask him to sit. He straightforwardly asked, "What's Bai Xingye up to?"

.....

.....

The battle of White Emperor City ten years ago was the only time this master and disciple had worked together.

Chen Changsheng had not known beforehand, as Xu Yourong had acted as a bridge between them, but the final result had been excellent.

Master and disciple, one inside and one outside, one out in the open and one hidden, had left a supreme expert like the White Emperor without anywhere to retreat. In the end, he was forced to go along with their plans and see all living beings. Together, they had killed two Angels of Sacred Light and extinguished Madam Mu. As for whether the White Emperor had shed any tears above the sea of clouds, nobody would ever know.

It appeared that Chen Changsheng's train of thought was right. Since what Shang Xingzhou cared about the most was the northern expedition, he would definitely be concerned over the alliance between the humans and the demi-humans.

Chen Changsheng replied, "The White Emperor still does not want to put out too much strength. You could even say... there's no sincerity in his cooperation. I'm concerned about what will happen afterward."

The negotiations between the two sides and specific clauses were being handled by the officials of the court and the bishops of the Li Palace.

But one could tell from certain details that the White Emperor truly had no interest in this war. Perhaps one could call him weak and weary.

Through his relationship with Luoluo, Chen Changsheng had a greater understanding of the situation.

The Demi-human race was currently on the decline. Perhaps the situation would have been better if the White Emperor had not taken the chance back then to eliminate the Xiang clan.

None of the experts of the Demi-human race's middle generation, Xiaode included, showed any signs of breaking through. This was far too lacking when compared to the Human race.

For at least three more years, the Demi-human race would still only have the White Emperor as their sole expert of the Divine Domain.

His safety was far too important to the Demi-human race, so he would never leave White Emperor City and the protection of the Red River's array.

And besides, what benefit would the Demi-human race gain from helping the humans defeat the demons?

The problem was that the Human race was flourishing so much that the Demi-human race found it impossible to refuse their request for troops.

If Chen Changsheng were in the White Emperor's place, he would have no idea how to handle the current situation.

In truth, an extremely simple solution had always existed for this problem.

Over the last ten years, this solution had been making its way

around the world, obtaining the support of more and more people.

"The eight hundred li of the Red River, the thirty thousand li of rivers and mountains, and all the people of the Demi-human race are waiting for you to marry their princess. All levels of society support you, so why are you still hesitating?"

Shang Xingzhou asked.

Chen Changsheng wanted to say something but stopped himself.

Shang Xingzhou prodded, "Equal wives is not without precedent."

Chen Changsheng shook his head.

Shang Xingzhou was not surprised at his answer, nor at the speed with which it was given.

"That's right—there's no need for that, and this matter is not as important as the people imagine."

Chen Changsheng was a little puzzled at these words, thinking to himself, isn't the alliance with the Demi-human race of utmost importance?

"In Taizong's era, it was the weak fighting the strong, so we needed to unify all the strength that we could unify, but now it's not necessary. The confluence of the north and south was a necessity because we share the same blood. If the demi-humans are willing to contribute their strength, that's great, but it's also fine if they don't. It's just a minor matter. When carrying out a task, one has to rely on oneself at the end. If we're strong enough, what need is there to care about anything else?"

Shang Xingzhou was speaking these words for Chen Changsheng to hear, and also for everyone in the Great Zhou Dynasty.

The Monastery of Eternal Spring had always maintained communication with the Imperial Palace, and the emperor would often spend the new-year holidays at Luoyang, but it was said that

Shang Xingzhou had never spoken a word on government policy.

In other words, this was the first time in ten years that Shang Xingzhou had spoken on worldly affairs.

His meaning was loud and clear. The stance toward the Demi-human race needed to be tough and unflinching.

Even if White Emperor City was not willing to send troops, this war would still proceed.

Chen Changsheng voiced the most important question.

"Why did Sir write a letter to Wang Po asking him to pick us up? How did Sir know that this was a scheme of Black Robe and the Eight Great Mountain Men?"

Shang Xingzhou replied, "Black Robe let me know on purpose."

Chen Changsheng was dumbstruck. Just what was going on? Were the demons still suffering from internal strife? Did Black Robe and the Demon Commander want to use human experts to completely exterminate the last traces of the Grand Scholar's line? But on second thought, with the demons in such perilous circumstances, could Black Robe do something so unwise?

Not even Shang Xingzhou could be sure what the real answer was. Was it because she was still a human? Or did Wang Zhice go to Xuelao City?

As Chen Changsheng awakened from his shock, he asked, "Just who is Black Robe?"

In the end, Shang Xingzhou did not answer this question.

Chen Changsheng was led away by the Daoist boy. He was taken to a small side courtyard, where he partook of a simple meal. Afterward, he received a box.

"Did the ancestor have you give this to me?"

He looked at the young Daoist boy and asked in shock.

The Daoist boy vigorously nodded and then ran out of the small courtyard. His flailing arms were quite the adorable sight.

Chen Changsheng was truly flabbergasted.

He couldn't seem to recall a time when his master had ever sent him anything.

Those two items that had served as rare gifts ended up being nothing more than sorrowful groundwork for the future.

He somewhat nervously opened the box. Inside were two small and exquisite magical artifacts, seeming to primarily be made of bronze. After studying them for quite a while, he understood that these were communication artifacts made from the shards of the Clear Sky Mirror. Using the innate abilities of the Clear Sky Mirror, one could use these artifacts to communicate in real time over long distances.

These were extraordinary objects that were completely capable of being ranked on the Tier of Legendary Weapons. They had presumably been personally forged by Shang Xingzhou and had probably needed a great deal of energy and focus.

These precious magical artifacts should have been used on the battlefield, so why had his master given them to him?

His spiritual sense fell on the stone pearls at his wrist. A gray stone pearl brightened.

Xu Yourong's voice came out from the pearl.

"Speak. I'm busy."

Chen Changsheng explained what had happened.

Xu Yourong's voice disappeared for a time, and then it spoke again.

"Perhaps... it was given to both of us."

Since Shang Xingzhou has, through his thoughts, revealed the gender of Black Robe, I will from now on be referring to Black

Robe as a woman in the narration.

Chapter 1136 – Leaving Alive

Chen Changsheng thought of a possibility. Earlier, he had rejected his master's proposal of equal wives... so were these two magical artifacts forged from shards of the Clear Sky Mirror meant to be out of praise for him?

Yes, apparently his master had always admired Yourong. He seemed to have mentioned this ten years ago at White Emperor City.

And based on what Yuren said, during his stays in Luoyang during the new-year holidays, Shang Xingzhou would rarely mention Chen Changsheng, but he had mentioned several times that Mount Li was someone else's sect, so Xu Yourong as Holy Maiden shouldn't keep on disturbing them.

If she shouldn't go to Mount Li, where should she go? The Li Palace, or Luoyang?

When he thought about how Xu Yourong was always able to easily gain the love of her elders, Chen Changsheng couldn't help but feel a little jealous.

Shang Xingzhou had thought that it was inconvenient for the two of them to live in different places and made these small devices, but he was not aware that they had resolved this problem long ago.

He and Xu Yourong had a special method of communicating with each other. This was how he had able to inform Xu Yourong at Holy Maiden Peak as quickly as possible when the White Crane flew into White Emperor City.

The glowing stone pearl on his wrist was a Heavenly Tome Monolith.

The Heavenly Tome Monoliths had always been a sort of spatial tunnel. Both the laws of the Mausoleum of Books and the method

to enter the Garden of Zhou were proof of this.

In these ten years, he and Xu Yourong had been incessantly researching and comprehending the Heavenly Tome Monoliths, finally grasping a part of their mysteries.

Their voices could travel through the Heavenly Tome Monolith to the other side, but even slightly condensed spiritual sense or real objects still could not.

At this moment, the other gray stone pearl on Chen Changsheng's wrist lit up.

"Luoluo pays respects to Teacher!"

A crisp and melodious voice came out from the stone pearl.

Yes, she also had a Heavenly Tome Monolith, and she had also learned how to communicate with Chen Changsheng.

There was a light clap from somewhere. The stone pearl communicating with Xu Yourong dimmed.

Chen Changsheng's mouth was agape. He didn't know what to say.

On the other side, Luoluo couldn't help but be anxious at the lack of reply and called, "Teacher! Teacher! Teacher, are you okay?"

Chen Changsheng replied, "I'm fine, just a bit absentminded."

"That's great!"

Even though they were separated by tens of thousands of li, Chen Changsheng still felt like he could see Luoluo's cute appearance as she patted her chest in relief.

Suddenly, he finally understood why Xu Yourong had been so unhappy these last few days, be it in the grassland of the Elf race or in Xunyang City.

It was all because of the matter from that day.

That day was truly very similar to today.

When the White Crane flew in from the Mount Song Army headquarters, he and Xu Yourong had been communicating as he rode a boat on the Red River.

The Jings had been singing in the river at the time and Luoluo was at his side, using her small hands to feed him fruit.

Luoluo had no idea Xu Yourong could hear what she was saying. He also had not thought of this at the time.

.....

.....

"Just what did Princess Luoluo say?"

Tang Thirty-Six's face was filled with curiosity. Not even his long beard blown by wind all over his face could conceal it.

Chen Changsheng used his peripheral vision to confirm that no one was looking at him. He also confirmed that no one was listening behind Tang Thirty-Six, so he whispered, "She said... 'Teacher, be good and open your mouth.'"

Tang Thirty-Six stared blankly, wanting to laugh but not daring, his entire face turning red.

The people on the wall finally noticed what was happening.

The Prince of Zhongshan raised his brows in displeasure. On the side, the Prime Minister smiled and spoke in a soothing voice.

Linghai Zhiwang and Daoist Siyuan glanced at each other and pretended not to see.

Just returned from the Bear tribe and taking up her new post, Archbishop An Lin gave a bitter laugh and said no more.

This place was Xunyang City.

All the prestigious figures were standing on the city wall.

As the spring deepened, the plants also flourished. The snowy plains of the north were warming, so that grand undertaking was

finally set to begin.

After several centuries, the Human race was about to set out on another northern expedition.

The emperor personally offered a libation and escorted the army from the Imperial Palace to the boundary of the capital.

Pope Chen Changsheng traveled with them all the way to Xunyang City.

The plains outside Xunyang City were covered in people, as dark and dense as the tide.

All of these people were going to meet their death, so this tide was the world's most powerful wave.

Tens of thousands of valiant spiritual senses and killing intents gathered together surpassed even the fiercest of west winds. Even if the Golden Dragon returned to the Central Continent and saw this killing aura rise to the skies from a thousand li away, it would still be startled away and not dare to approach.

Ten thousand Orthodoxy cavalry, sixty thousand black-armored cavalry and even more ordinary soldiers were gathered here. The Six Prefects of the Li Palace, the twenty-three Divine Generals of the Great Zhou, three thousand priests, and the elites of South Stream Temple were all being sent forth. All of Mount Li's Sword Hall was gathered here, as were the experts from the various sects, the Guardians and masters from the noble clans. And there was still Wang Po, Huai Ren, the Mount Li Sect Master, Mao Qiuyu, and the Prince of Xiang. With all these experts of the Divine Domain ready to move at any time, this momentum was no less than that of the northern expedition from several centuries ago.

Tens of thousands of soldiers began to march, and as they set forth, the plains grew quieter and quieter, the atmosphere more and more somber.

No one laughed, and no one paid any attention to what had

happened earlier.

Tang Thirty-Six looked toward a mountain range to the west and frowned. "I didn't expect the Prince of Xiang to be willing to set off with the Army of the Left."

Xunyang City was the place from which all their arrows would be fired. Such a critical staging ground required an expert of the Divine Domain to oversee it.

Cao Yunping had excellent relationships with all sides and had an honest and amiable personality. As someone deeply trusted by everyone, he ended up being chosen.

The Prince of Xiang had spent most of the last ten years at Blue Pass, acting very low-key.

This naturally wasn't because his son Prince Chen Liu was being held hostage in the capital. It was because the situation demanded it.

Everyone thought that he would try and vie for this position, but to their consternation, he had not spoken a word.

It would be easier to understand if it were the Prince of Zhongshan. This irritable prince would assuredly charge at the very front of the army for the pride of the Chen Imperial clan.

"There are many surprising things going on. For instance, you actually grew a beard."

Chen Changsheng looked at Tang Thirty-Six's face and shook his head. He still couldn't get used to it.

Tang Thirty-Six explained, "My elegance is far too great. I grew a beard to somewhat conceal it and also to avoid attracting too many girls."

His personality truly had calmed down in the last few years, and he cursed in public far less than he used to, but his narcissism remained unchanged.

But it could not be completely attributed to narcissism. His words contained a little truth, a tinge of helplessness.

The Old Lady of the Mutuo clan had fallen seriously ill last year, and once she recovered, she seemed to see beyond secular affairs. Yet she still could not relinquish her most beloved granddaughter, so she ran off to Wenshui and stayed in the Tang clan's old estate, shamelessly staying for three months in the bid to negotiate a marriage with the Tang clan. Tang Thirty-Six didn't dare return home, and he also didn't dare to stay at the Orthodox Academy. In the end, he decided to follow Su Moyu and pass the turn of the new year at Xiling's Ten Thousand Years Pavilion.

Chen Changsheng said, "I hear that the young lady is breathtakingly beautiful?"

Tang Thirty-Six replied, "The Mutuo clan has always had many beauties, but am I really one of those superficial fellows who only pays attention to looks?"

Chen Changsheng said, "Yourong knows that lady and says she has an excellent personality. And besides, for the sake of efficiency, you should meet her."

Tang Thirty-Six sneered, "I would dare to gamble that these weren't her original words."

Chen Changsheng froze for a moment before saying, "Her original words were that you didn't match up to that lady."

Furious, Tang Thirty-Six flicked his sleeves and left.

He descended the city wall, took the reins, mounted his horse, and rode off into the north.

In this entire process, he did not even glance at Chen Changsheng.

"Come back alive!"

Chen Changsheng yelled out.

Even though countless people were looking at him, he seemed not to notice.

Tang Thirty-Six waved his hand, not even turning around.

Chapter 1137 – The Distant Horsehooves, the Songs of Grief

Tang Thirty-Six had gone to the front line.

Of course, he wasn't going to be part of the vanguard. No one would agree to that, and he didn't have the ability for it.

The role he would play in this war was one of logistics. To be more precise, he was Jin Yulu's deputy.

Chen Changsheng's trip to White Emperor City had not been able to make the demi-humans completely sign on with the humans, but he had at least managed to free Jin Yulu from his life of agriculture.

This legendary demi-human general was soon to play the important role that he had played several hundred years ago.

All the supply wagons the Imperial Court sent to the front lines, the rations, the weapons, the aid from the various counties and provinces, and the contributions from the noble clans and merchant companies were all under his control.

His deputy was also of utmost importance.

Logically speaking, Tang Thirty-Six's background was not sufficient, at least not enough to convince everyone, but no one objected to his appointment.

This was not because of Tang Thirty-Six's background, or because he was willing to risk the honor and glory that came from being a young master of a great clan to venture to the front lines. It was because of the Tang clan's contribution to the war fund.

Liang Wangsun had contributed half his clan's fortune for the war, and so had the Wenshui Tangs.

It was also half a clan's fortune, but only by seeing it personally could one understand how terrifying the Tang clan's deed was.

Because half of the Tang clan's fortune was a monstrously terrifying number.

Even the experienced officials from the Ministry of Revenue were stunned speechless when they saw the ledgers that required tensome carriages to fully deliver.

The entire continent knew that the Tang clan was the richest place in the world, with extremely deep foundational resources and the richest of stockpiles.

But only now did the common people learn just how much money the Tang clan had.

'Wealthier than a country' was truly not empty praise.

The Tang Old Master was truly an extraordinary person.

Someone who was wealthier than a country would often become the enemy of the country.

This was a law that was hard to defy and the source of many tragedies.

When the details of this matter became known, many people wondered whether the Tang clan wanted to avoid touching upon the taboo of the Imperial Court by using this method to lessen its hostility.

Half of its fortune was truly a vast sum, and parting with it was as painful as cutting off one's own arm, but it was worth it as long as the Tang clan could remain.

This conjecture seemed very reasonable, but Chen Changsheng didn't think so.

Breaking into Xuelao City and subjugating the demons was the Tang Old Master's lifelong wish, the one thing he wanted to do in the last several centuries.

In this aspect, he and Shang Xingzhou were natural allies, the firmest of comrades. Nothing could change their minds.

One could even say that he had lived for this day.

As long as the humans could thoroughly defeat the demons, what did he care for his clan's fortune?

If he hadn't had to think about his descendants and the continuation of his clan, he probably would have invested the entire fortune of the Tang clan in this war.

What would it feel like to be the grandson of an old man like this?

Chen Changsheng gazed at the plume of dust rising from the plain, his lips curling into a smile.

Tang Thirty-Six was riding a white horse and dressed in white while the Wenshui Sword was tied to his belt. He was very elegant and graceful.

He had not said anything to Chen Changsheng, nor had he indicated that Chen Changsheng should take care of himself, because victory was certain in this war.

Just like Mountain Man Yanzhi said, the momentum of the world was decided.

The momentum of the Demon race had already come to a stop.

Just like the Tang Old Master and Liang Wangsun, the Human race was willing to pay everything, renounce all their grudges, so that they could win this war.

The human world had been waiting all this time for this day.

The Human race had prepared ages upon ages for this war.

In terms of supplies and the transferring of soldiers, it was ten years.

In terms of strategies and planning, it was several centuries.

In terms of will and spirit, it was several thousand years.

Countless sages, countless martyrs, every Emperor, every Pope...

everything they did was for today.

This undercurrent had been surging for countless days, and as the situation changed, it had finally become a spring tide.

The Demon race, once overlords of the continent, were now struggling on death's door in the north, barely muddling through their days, so they had not even noticed any of this. Even if some of the soberer of their elite noticed this, like the young Demon Lord or Mountain Man Yanzhi, too little time had been left for them, and the Demon race internally was far too much of a mess.

Whenever he thought about the Demon race's circumstances, Chen Changsheng would rejoice, but there would always be some confusion. And then he remembered Shang Xingzhou's words from Luoyang.

Perhaps that person recognized that they were still a human?

As he gazed at plume after plume of dust rising from the plains and sensed a faint quaking, Chen Changsheng had no more time to ponder that question.

Was the quaking the distant horsehooves or his own heartbeat?

He felt like his heart was beating faster, but there was no reason.

Was it because the curtain of this grand war was about to be torn open?

The demons would lose and the humans would win. Everything had already been decided.

But we still have to work for it, truly put forth all our effort, in order to gain true victory.

When he thought of the coming days, about how much blood would be spilled by these young men and women leaving Xunyang City, how many sacrifices would be made...

Even someone as calm as him felt his cheeks turn hot.

.....

.....

The valley in the late spring was covered in blood.

The lower-class demon soldiers were even uglier in death, and stench rose from their corpses scattered amongst the grass. The plains were still not too hot, but if enough time passed, they would still inevitably rot.

At the beginning, the human armies would use array masters to clear the battlefield. After the conclusion of each battle on the plains, one would be able to see the clear light from the arrays and the ensuing flames. Later on, as more and more demon soldiers died, as the war grew increasingly tense, this duty was no longer asked of the array masters so that they could conserve their energy.

The temporary camp had been set up at a high point, but the so-called valley was really just a rolling meadow, so their position really couldn't be described as unassailable.

Twilight painted the distant plains and nearby carts. The smoke from the cooking fires was already extinguished and bonfires began to gradually brighten. Someone began to sing a grief-stricken song, though all this did was incur a chorus of curses.

Liang Hongzhuang leaned against the wheel of a cart, watching through squinted eyes as the sun sank. The stalk of grass in his mouth trembled.

He naturally wasn't wearing his red dancing dress, and he also wasn't wearing any makeup. He had always had a handsome appearance, especially his inky brows. They were shaped like slender hooks, their charming appearance imbued with a heroic air. His natural elegance had attracted many stares when he first stepped onto the battlefield, but now, no one dared to say anything.

In this army, he had the strongest cultivation level, had killed the

most soldiers, and had the most injuries.

A deep wound had been cut beneath his ribs. One could see white bone through the chinks in the bandage and smell the scent of decay.

A person sat next to him, a mocking smile appearing on his face as he looked at the corpses of the lower-class demons strewn across the grass.

"After so many days, we haven't seen one high-class demon. Were they all killed by the old Demon Lord?"

The one speaking was Feng Guijun. He had been Governor of Xunyang City for several decades, but now he was a general on the front lines.

When he heard Liang Hongzhuang speaking to the Pope that night, he vaguely understood what his end would be.

But he hadn't expected that he would end up in the same place on the front lines as Liang Hongzhuang, nor did he know if this had been the Pope's will or the Holy Maiden's arrangement.

Liang Hongzhuang ignored him.

Feng Guijun jeered, "The Imperial Court wanted to send me to my death to repay the Liang Estate for half its fortune, but what about you? Why didn't your elder brother come but instead sent you to your death?"

Yes, from a certain perspective, being sent to this part of the plain was being sent to death. Although the humans now occupied the absolute advantage, with the demon soldiers' death toll being twice that of the human soldiers'... people would still die, especially now that many people noticed that the circumstances were rather strange.

Feng Guijun's jeers came mostly from his unease.

Upon entering the plains, the human armies had encountered

many of the demon troops, engaging them in many intense battles.

They quickly began to notice something strange.

Other than an extremely small number of officers, no high-class demons had been spotted in these battles.

They hadn't even spotted a hair of the Demon race's most formidable wolf cavalry. It was like they had disappeared.

The troops surging toward the human army like a tide were all the lowest class of demon soldier.

The minds of these low-class demons developed slowly, and they could be called stupid. Even though they possessed an enormous strength that surpassed that of an ordinary human, the crossbows and array masters of the human armies made them nothing but targets for massacre. They normally weren't that hard to deal with.

The problem was that the lower-class demon soldiers the human armies encountered now were different.

Now, they were braver, their personalities even more violent, their methods even crueler. They seemed to have no fear of death.

If one said that the lower-class demon soldiers were of somewhat lower intelligence in the past, they had now lost any sort of awareness, and transformed into tools purely meant for killing.

The countless low-class demons were unafraid of death, and if one fell, another would charge to take their place. This placed a massive pressure on the human armies, both militarily and mentally.

The army that Feng Guijun led had suffered grievous casualties, and it was hard to say how long they would be able to last.

Similar circumstances were probably taking place all over this plain.

Liang Hongzhuang said, "It's probably some sort of medicine

that's made these ugly fellows lose their mind, making them only come here to seek their deaths."

Many people had speculated this, but they couldn't understand why the demons had resorted to such extreme methods even though the war had just begun.

Such a medicine was bound to have devastating side effects. They were probably so severe that the moment those demon soldiers took this medicine, their lives would begin burning away.

As Feng Guijun gazed at the deepening twilight, the grief in his eyes deepened as well. He muttered, "Just what do the demons want to do?"

From a certain standpoint, he had truly been sent to his death by the Imperial Court so as to soothe the Liang Estate's old grudge.

But he had still been the Governor of Xunyang City for several decades and was now a general on the front lines.

Liang Hongzhuang proposed, "The demons want to frighten us into retreating."

Feng Guijun blankly gazed at him for a moment. He understood, a bitter smile appearing on his face.

They were the most forward army of the vanguard.

If this really was the Demon race's strategy, they were bound to suffer an endless stream of attacks.

Either the commander would order a retreat, or one side would be slaughtered to a man.

"Tell me, since we've all been sent to our deaths, what do we need to be afraid of?"

Liang Hongzhuang added, "And even if we die now, we've still earned a profit."

Since the start of the war, he had already killed thirty-some demon soldiers, and the soldiers led by Feng Guijun had already

killed three times their number. They truly had earned a profit.

Feng Guijun said no more.

Liang Hongzhuang spit out the stalk of grass and began to sing a song of grief.

Curses rose once more from his surroundings, but this time, he didn't stop.

Liang Hongzhuang's singing voice was rather strange. It was very deep and lingering, just like the rivers slowly flowing through these plains.

"I've been listening to operas in Xunyang City for so many years. I've always felt like your singing style was rather strange, but I've never asked you about it."

Feng Guijun asked, "Just which school are you a part of? The Jin clan of Luling or Orangewater Tent?"

Liang Hongzhuang replied, "I heard that this is the singing style of the operas in Xuelao City."

Feng Guijun was stunned. Pointing at the corpses scattered over the plains, he asked, "These things can understand it?"

Liang Hongzhuang shook his head. "I don't know."

The night sky resounded with the warning from a Red Falcon bringing urgent orders.

The nearest divisions of the human army were all under attack.

And the primary focus of the enemy attacks was this part of the plains.

The ground shook.

The twilight deepened into darkness.

Countless demon soldiers were surging out from the darkness.

Feng Guijun knew that this battle would last for the entire night, and he couldn't stop his face from paling. "Will we be able to see

the sun rise tomorrow?"

Liang Hongzhuang stood up and looked at the night sky. "The stars are very beautiful tonight."

Chapter 1138 – Since We Have to Go Sooner or Later, Why Not Go Sooner?

The night sky was cut apart by the extremely close eaves into a black cloth.

The stars were truly very bright tonight. It was like someone had used golden thread to weave many tiny flowers into the black cloth.

This place was the deepest hall within the Li Palace, and also Chen Changsheng's residence.

He was currently eating, accompanied by Gou Hanshi.

Qiushan Jun remained to guard Mount Li, and Qi Jian had failed to obtain permission to follow Zhexiu to the north.

Guan Feibai, Liang Banhu, and Bai Cai had gone to the front line.

But Gou Hanshi had been kept by Chen Changsheng.

After they concluded their very simple meal, An Hua and several priests came in with a file that had just been sent over. They laid the contents out on the desks placed in front of Chen Changsheng and Gou Hanshi.

The only sound in the hall was the gurgling of flowing water.

The Green Leaf had been taken somewhere else.

After some time, Gou Hanshi raised his head and rubbed his rather fatigued face.

An Hua, who was standing on the side, offered a long-prepared hot towel.

Gou Hanshi paused for a moment before softly expressing his thanks and taking the towel to wipe his face.

Chen Changsheng had also finished reading over the documents, so An Hua hurried over to him.

After a while, he and Gou Hanshi began to softly converse with each other, discussing what they thought and analyzing the contents of the documents.

The opinion they reached would be sent to the Imperial Palace in the shortest time possible for the emperor's consideration.

At the same time, Star Seizer Academy would be offering its own opinion.

The emperor would convene with the prime minister and the heads of all the other ministries to arrive at the final conclusion.

Everything in the current Great Zhou Dynasty revolved around the progress of this war.

As for the ordinary matters of the court and the welfare of the people of the counties and provinces, they had all been handed over to Mo Yu.

One had to admit that the emperor had a deep trust in Mo Yu.

And based on the reaction from the court and the people, she had not let down the trust placed in her or the teachings of the Tianhai Divine Empress.

This life had already persisted for quite a few days, but Gou Hanshi still found some things impossible to get used to.

For instance, why were the towels An Hua offered so hot? Was she not afraid of her hands getting blisters?

He was a very meticulous person, so he had already noted that An Hua's hands were truly not injured.

Another question on his mind was, how was the Li Palace able to get the reports from the front line even faster than the Ministry of the Army?

This was especially the case for several important pieces of news. It was often the case that the Li Palace would find out immediately when an incident took place on the front lines.

Gou Hanshi found this impossible to understand.

Compared to this, the methods of the demons were not that shocking at all.

"The seventh investigation report from the Thirteen Divisions of Radiant Green was sent back. It confirms that the hearts of the demon soldiers have swelled. They're one and a half times larger than usual."

He said to Chen Changsheng, "Our conjecture was correct. They're using a medicine to increase their strength, but at the same time, it destroys their intelligence and deprives them of their instinctive fear of death."

Chen Changsheng asked, "Is there an antidote?"

He shook his head right after he said this. He knew that this was an extremely stupid question.

Even if they could find an antidote, they had no means of making those tens of thousands of lower-class demon soldiers take it.

If his and Gou Hanshi's conjecture was correct, this medicine used by the Demon race actually originated from the Human race.

Ten thousand years ago, the Longevity Sect had controlled many demi-human servants. It was said that several of their eccentric yet extremely talented elders enjoyed using these demi-human servants to study the berserk metamorphosis of the Demi-human race. No one knew what they turned up in their research, but they had managed to create a medicine that could stimulate the hidden potential of living creatures and forcefully trigger berserk metamorphosis.

So strong was this medicine that using it once would cause the heart to explode. There had been no exceptions, so the Longevity Sect quickly sealed it away in a restricted area.

The medicine the demons were using now was very similar to the medicine used by the Longevity Sect.

Coupled with the fact that the Longevity Sect had colluded in secret with the demons, the truth was right before their eyes.

Fortunately, the Longevity Sect was in decline, and Su Li's attack twenty years ago had dealt them another heavy blow.

"The Demon race has always been inferior to us in numbers, and now it takes two or three demon soldiers to exchange for one of ours."

Chen Changsheng said, "This method is too insane. There's no reason for it."

Gou Hanshi countered, "Reason depends on the specific circumstances. The lower-class demons are very important to the reproductive capacity of the demons, and if too many of them die, it will affect the future prospects of the Demon race in the long term. However, their utmost priority is survival. If they can frighten us into retreating, they might even be willing to endure four out of every five lower-class demons dying."

Chen Changsheng had nothing to say.

The situation presented in the field reports was truly rather hard to deal with. The war had just begun, but the demons were already acting like they were fighting the final battle. Although no experts had appeared, anyone would feel their courage fleeing them if they saw tens of thousands of demon soldiers heedlessly charging toward them.

Many human soldiers really had collapsed in the face of these frenzied and suicidal assaults. On some of the battlefields suffering from the most pressure, they had even been routed. If Linghai Zhiwang and the Orthodoxy cavalry hadn't been passing through and killed a hundred-some demons, the situation might have been impossible to stabilize.

If the demons wanted to use this method to frighten the human armies into retreat, or at least damage their morale, he had to

admit that they had succeeded.

Liang Hongzhuang supported this line of thought, as did Gou Hanshi, though Gou Hanshi was thinking a bit further.

"I don't know if this is the Demon Lord's plan or Black Robe's strategy, but it's clear that their more important goal is to wear us down."

Gou Hanshi stood up and said, "They want to wear down our courage, spirit, and most importantly of all, our time."

A map condensed from light was floating in the air.

He pointed at the three lines on the map and said, "Based on the primary focuses of their attacks and the time it takes for them to transfer, their goal is clear. They want to use these three waves, use the thirty thousand li of the plains and their lives, to buy enough time."

The human armies were already seventeen days behind their original plans.

If they continued to proceed this slowly, even if the human army could break through each layer of the demon defense and eventually reach Xuelao City, it would probably be late winter by then.

This situation would be so perilous that it would be impossible to imagine.

"What should we do?" Chen Changsheng asked.

Gou Hanshi thought for a while, and then he declared, "It's fine if we just proceed according to the original plan."

Puzzled, Chen Changsheng asked, "Just act like nothing happened?"

"In truth, nothing really happened. We always knew that the demons would pay any price to resist."

Gou Hanshi added, "On the contrary, I think that no matter if

this was the Demon Lord's scheme or Black Robe's, it's a massive mistake. It's been many years since the last great war, and at least half of the soldiers in our armies at the front lines have never stepped onto the battlefield. The demon offensive this time is so pressing and rapid that it conveniently serves as a trial, a tempering that can make these soldiers into true veterans."

Chen Changsheng said, "It's very hard to pass this kind of trial and tempering."

Gou Hanshi asked, "If we can't even make it through this pass, why should we even talk about attacking Xuelao City?"

Chen Changsheng argued, "Even if we can make it through this pass, we will suffer many unexpected losses."

"Yes, many people will die this time. They might be people that we know, people who, in our eyes, shouldn't have died so soon."

Gou Hanshi stared at him and said, "But everyone will die. We will also go over there, and we will also die, so I request that you please remain calm."

Chen Changsheng walked to the edge of the pool. As he watched the flowing waters slowly spin the wooden ladle about, he thought about the Green Leaf, thought about how, ten-some years ago, his martial uncle Pope stood in the ruins of the southern district of the capital, holding the Green Leaf and fighting a bitter battle with the Divine Empress. He softly said, "I don't want to stay in the capital."

"No."

Gou Hanshi spoke without hesitation.

Chen Changsheng said, "Since we have to go sooner or later, why can't we go sooner?"

Gou Hanshi said, "You are the Pope, so you must remain in the capital to keep the people at ease. Only when we can see Xuelao City are you allowed to leave."

When they saw Xuelao City, it would be time for the final and decisive battle.

Only if Chen Changsheng left the capital would the believers and people not worry about the state of the war. Instead, this would only strengthen their belief that victory was certain.

This was an accepted arrangement, or perhaps it was better to say that this had been negotiated before the war had even begun.

When the human armies invaded Xuelao City, it would be Chen Changsheng and not the emperor who would be present.

The documents were taken away by the priests while the summary of their opinion was speedily delivered to the Imperial Palace.

Gou Hanshi took a hot towel from An Hua, expressed his thanks, and then covered his face with it, somewhat alleviating his exhaustion.

When he opened his eyes, he realized that Chen Changsheng was no longer there.

He suddenly heard the sound of a sword.

Gou Hanshi went to the stone room.

Chen Changsheng was quietly standing inside.

There was no sword in the stone room.

It was impossible to tell what he was thinking.

Gou Hanshi noticed that something was strange about his mood and asked, "What happened?"

Chen Changsheng replied, "Liang Hongzhuang died."

A little surprised, Gou Hanshi said, "Liang Hongzhuang?"

Chen Changsheng answered, "Yes, a person I know."

Chapter 1139 – I Want to Go to Xuelao City

Gou Hanshi was quiet for a while, and then he said, "I know who he is."

Liang Hongzhuang was Liang Wangsun's younger brother, and he had another, more secretive, relationship with the Mount Li Sword Sect: he was a relative of Liang Banhu and Liang Xiaoxiao.

Neither Chen Changsheng nor Gou Hanshi said anything, causing the stone chamber to sink into silence.

Just like they had discussed earlier, they might suffer unexpected losses this time. Some of the people who they thought shouldn't have died so soon... would die.

Liang Hongzhuang was this sort of person. He was an important figure of the Liang Estate and was also a Star Condensation expert.

The war had not been going on for too long, and based on past experiences, it was far from reaching its most desperate phase, but he had still ended up dying.

Chen Changsheng had met Liang Hongzhuang three times and they had only exchanged several dozen sentences. They couldn't be described as acquaintances, but he still knew who he was.

There were still many people he knew on the battlefield: Tang Thirty-Six, Linghai Zhiwang, and the students and teachers of the Orthodox Academy like Chu Wenbin. And there was her.

But Gou Hanshi also knew many people on the battlefield: Guan Feibai, Liang Banhu, Bai Cai, his martial uncles of the Sword Hall, and many of his comrades from the south.

"My apologies. It shouldn't be up to you to persuade me," Chen Changsheng said to Gou Hanshi.

Gou Hanshi replied, "You've probably guessed that it was Yourong who wanted me to tell you this."

Chen Changsheng looked at the string of stone pearls on his wrist and said, "She could have just said it to me herself."

.....

.....

The previous Governor of Xunyang City, Feng Guijun, had once worried over whether they could last the entire night in this battle with the demons, whether they could see the sun rise tomorrow.

Reality proved that he was worrying too much.

His troops weren't even able to resist the first wave. Right when the night began, those insane demon soldiers broke through their defenses.

There were truly too many demon soldiers.

In the starlight, they saw the black tide charge over the plains, and he and every other human soldier mentally groaned.

Liang Hongzhuang did not groan, and his face held no fear. He did not whistle or shout, and he did not sing a valorous song. He just set about attacking that black tide.

Reality similarly proved that the courageous were often well-rewarded.

Reinforcements promptly arrived. The cavalry led by Divine General Peng Shihai succeeded in altering the course of the entire battle, rescuing these soldiers who had bitterly defended this place for two days and two nights.

Desperate battles were taking place all over the plains, with everyone fighting for themselves. That this place could receive reinforcements naturally had to do with the important people here.

Although the Imperial Court had sent him to his death, the Imperial Court was not willing to see the Governor of Xunyang City die so early, and certainly not Liang Hongzhuang.

The bonfires were lit once more, their flames shining over meadows.

The demon soldiers had already lost their intelligence, so there was no need to worry about sneak attacks.

The surviving soldiers huddled around the bonfires, their blood-drenched faces devoid of emotion.

Ten-some white ceremonial robes fluttered amongst the grass. These beautiful white flowers attracted the gazes of many people.

The teachers and students of the Thirteen Divisions of Radiant Green were searching for any lucky survivors. They had medicines with them to provide urgent treatment, and the clear light of the Sacred Light technique could occasionally be spotted.

Alas, in this desperate war, it was very difficult to find too many wounded. The grass was covered in the corpses of human soldiers.

Even at the end, no one had been able to find Liang Hongzhuang.

When the previous Governor of Xunyang City, Feng Guijun, was found, his body was covered in blood and his face dazed. He was dejectedly muttering to himself.

"Why, why... you didn't need to, no, you didn't..."

No one understood what he wanted to say, nor did anyone know what had made him like this.

Feng Guijun clearly remembered what had happened just a few moments ago.

Raising his metal spear, Liang Hongzhuang had charged into the black mass of demon soldiers, quickly vanishing into its depths.

After living like a prince for so many years, he truly was very afraid. He wanted nothing more than to turn and run, but his experiences from the last few days told him that the demon soldiers were now true beasts, lacking any capacity to reason. If they were not completely killed, they would continue chasing.

And besides, he was still Governor of Xunyang City.

...The former Governor of Xunyang City.

He was a general now.

He yelled and led the surrounding soldiers in attacking the demon soldiers.

He basically forgot what happened after that. He only remembered waving his blade, falling and climbing back up. At the start he could still feel the pain from his body, but he even began to grow numb to that. He just felt like the blade in his hand was getting heavier and heavier along with his breathing.

Just when he had reached his breaking point, when he wanted to stop caring and go to sleep, he suddenly heard a sound in the distance.

Reinforcements were here!

His mind reinvigorated, he squeezed out the last bit of his strength to charge toward the perimeter, only to descend into despair.

Several dozen demon soldiers were charging out from the darkness there, their 人-shaped mouths dripping with stinking saliva, their eyes red.

Just when he thought that he and his fellow soldiers were doomed, he saw a person amongst the demon soldiers.

Liang Hongzhuang stood up, his body tottering as he leaned on his spear.

Feng Guijun wanted to yell at Liang Hongzhuang to run, but he found himself unable to speak.

Liang Hongzhuang didn't run.

He had chosen self-combustion.

His Ethereal Palace connected with the true essence in all of his

one hundred and eight Qi openings, causing it all to spurt out at once.

A silver firework illuminated the plains.

Scorching and sacred star radiance instantly tore apart the bodies of the demon soldiers.

To cultivators, this was the most miserable way to die, the most painful farewell.

.....

.....

"You didn't need to. It's just a death.

"I didn't even say that I wasn't willing to die, so why put yourself through so much pain?"

Feng Guijun dejectedly sat on the grass.

"General Feng?"

A woman dressed in white walked up to him.

A curtained hat obscured her face, also somewhat muffling her voice.

Feng Guijun ignored her.

There was a glint of black light.

Feng Guijun's palm was pierced by a black hairpin, leaving a delicate hole.

Conveniently, the pain finally succeeded in rousing him from his daze, but it did not make him shout.

Still under the starlight, he did not see a black tide of demon soldiers, but an incomparably beautiful face. It shocked him all the same.

"It's... my lady?"

Feng Guijun spoke in a trembling voice, and then he began to cry.

"My lady should have saved him!"

The woman ignored his words, indifferently saying, "Congratulations. You now have two choices. You have already proved your courage in battle and your sins have been redeemed. You can return to Xunyang City. Of course, you can no longer be the governor, but you can live as an ordinary commoner."

Slightly puzzled, Feng Guijun asked, "The second option is?"

The woman replied, "You can stay here. Once your wounds are healed, you will rejoin the army and continue north."

Feng Guijun said nothing for a very long time.

Any person would know which of these two options to choose.

An hour ago, he would have easily made a choice.

Now, however, it was excruciatingly difficult.

He knew that this woman was not deceiving him, because she disdained to do such things.

"I choose the second option."

His voice trembled. He was clearly still fearful and uneasy.

The woman was rather surprised. "Why?"

Feng Guijun raised his head and earnestly asked her, "I hear that there are operas in Xuelao City?"

The woman nodded.

Feng Guijun replied, "I want to go and listen and find out just how it is different from the styles of the Jin clan of Luling or the Orangewater Tent."

.....

.....

Feng Guijun was sent with the other heavily injured who had been found to the major camp to the south for treatment.

When they recovered, they could choose to rejoin the army or go back home.

But the teachers and students of the Thirteen Divisions of Radiant Green remained on the battlefield, continuing to search for the wounded and treat their wounds.

Sometimes, the faint aroma of herbs would obscure the scent of blood and rotting flesh.

The most calming of all were still those streams of Sacred Light.

This labor lasted until the sun rose.

No matter how serious their injuries were, as long as these women found them, they could be treated. At times, it was practically a miracle.

There was a break in the battle.

The demon soldiers in a radius of a hundred-some li had all been killed.

The vanguard settled down to reconsolidate. Strangely, however, other than the Red Falcons headed toward the major camp, there were also many Red Falcons landing in the grass, and after noon, there were also many messenger horses.

A piece of news gradually began to spread through the tens of thousands of soldiers.

The Holy Maiden was walking amongst the plains.

.....

.....

Xu Yourong walked through the plains.

Wherever she passed, golden flames would burn the rotting bodies of the demon soldiers into smoke.

Since her identity was revealed, there was naturally no need to keep concealing it.

A gentle breeze swept away the smoke, leaving the plains clear and bright once more.

Ten-some cavalrymen were waiting in front of her.

To her sides, soldiers kneeled on the plains. Even the wounded had struggled up to kneel, their faces brimming with piety and happiness at their good fortune.

To have been personally treated by the Holy Maiden, how many lives would they need in order to repay this blessing?

The cavalry who had arrived from various places represented the wills of many Divine Generals as well as several prestigious figures from the capital.

They were all messengers who wanted to urge Xu Yourong to hurry back to the capital.

The most important reason was naturally her safety.

Everyone knew that the Holy Maiden had the blood of the Heavenly Phoenix and was a true cultivating genius. Although she was young, she was already half a step from the Divine.

But this place was a battlefield full of death and slaughter. Without the Pope at her side, her presence made people feel uneasy.

Another important reason was that the South Stream Temple sword array was not with her.

The disciples of South Stream Temple were also not at the major camp to the south. They were at the even farther and far more important Central Army camp, tasked with the duty of protecting the commander of the northern expedition.

The cavalrymen kneeled and implored the Holy Maiden to quickly return to the capital.

Xu Yourong did not even glance at them. She took a letter from a disciple of South Stream Temple.

This disciple had traveled here overnight. Terribly fatigued, she immediately sat down and began to meditate. One could imagine just how important this letter was.

This letter came from the Central Army camp. It did not come from the commander, nor did it have any relation to the capital. It had been written by Ye Xiaolian.

The South Stream Temple sword array protecting the Central Army camp was under her command. For this reason, she knew many secrets.

Of course, it could not be ruled out that several important figures had used her to communicate some information to Xu Yourong.

.....

.....

Many important people, including those Divine Generals, had always known that the Holy Maiden was on the battlefield.

In the previous days of bitter battle, she had led the teachers and students of the Thirteen Divisions of Radiant Green, rushing off to the various battlefields, saving the lives of countless soldiers.

Why was it that these important individuals had not exposed this matter earlier, but were standing up today and imploring her to return to the capital for her safety?

The explanation given in Ye Xiaolian's letter was that Xu Yourong had saved too many wounded today.

In order to save all those people teetering on the verge of death, she could not have relied on the Sacred Light technique alone. The Holy Maiden had undoubtedly used that medicine.

She had also probably used that medicine in the last few days, but she had not used too much, so they had been able to endure it.

She had used too much today, so they had no longer been able to stand it. They requested that she leave.

In truth, they all believed that the authority to distribute this medicine should never have been hers. The Holy Maiden viewed everyone in the world with compassion. She would pay any price to save the wounded before her. But if this medicine was used up on ordinary soldiers, what would happen if a Divine General was wounded? If a prince was about to die?

This sounded very callous, but this was the battlefield, this was a war. The distribution of any resource needed to be regulated. Life and death were decreed by fate, but they absolutely had different weights to them.

There had been no war in these last few years, so the Li Palace had removed the rules on the monthly distribution of the Cinnabar Pill. A simple mathematical operation was enough to determine just how many Cinnabar Pills had been saved up.

The right to distribute the Cinnabar Pills rested in the Li Palace's hands, but the actual distribution should have required a consultation with the generals on the front line.

In times of peace, the collected will of the powerful figures these cavalrymen represented would not have been able to shake her. But this was a time of war, and the status of the army was rising higher and higher. Moreover, the attempts of the generals were reasonable from a certain viewpoint, and they had also accorded her sufficient respect.

What sort of answer would she give?

Xu Yourong slowly stretched out her hand and took off her curtained hat, revealing her perfect face.

The plains fell silent.

Only the South Stream Temple disciple standing nearby could see the exhaustion on her face.

She gazed at those cavalrymen.

A cool breeze blew across the long grass of the plains, rustling

them with a sound like the crashing of waves.

Chapter 1140 – [Bird Mountain Bright](#)

Xu Yourong silently gazed at the small bottle in her hand.

She still had a few of these bottles, some in her sleeve and some in the Tong Bow.

Countless eyes rested on her hands, their gazes fervent, nervous, or uneasy.

They had all guessed truly. This small bottle contained the legendary Cinnabar Pills.

This was the most important reason all the generals were urgently imploring Xu Yourong to return to the capital.

"These pills are Chen Changsheng's, and what's his is mine."

Xu Yourong looked at the kneeling cavalrymen and said, "I know that many amongst you are unconvinced, but do not let me know, because that will make me unhappy."

The cavalrymen went stiff, but they had understood something from her calm tone.

Unspoken words were important information that could be heard without being spoken.

She was replying to the entire world.

If she was not happy, perhaps this entire world would no longer have the Cinnabar Pill.

The cavalrymen bowed with the most respectful of postures and then left with the fastest of speeds to relay her words to the rest of the plains.

The South Stream Temple disciple looked hesitantly at her.

Wouldn't it be better to go back?

Xu Yourong's body and spirit were formidable, but even so, she was still rather tired.

But she would not leave.

Only here could she see the changes on the battlefield as they happened, get the most authentic understanding of the situation.

And it was only in this way that the people in the capital could get the most authentic understanding of the situation.

The situation was very complicated. The selection of commander-in-chief for this expedition had already served as a warning sign.

Xu Shiji, who had been pushed forward by many people, immediately shut himself up in his estate upon receiving a letter from her, firmly refusing with the excuse of illness.

Peng Shihai and the other Divine Generals who had learned from Chen Guansong currently held half the power in the Great Zhou Army, but choosing the commander-in-chief from one of them was certain to incur fierce opposition from the Western Army, represented by Xue He. The approval of the Li Palace would also have been very difficult to obtain.

And the candidates heavily favored by the Orthodoxy found it impossible to obtain the support of the ministers of the court and the princes of the Chen clan.

After racking their brains, everyone ended up casting their gazes to a long-forgotten place: the Divine General of the East's estate.

Xu Shiji seemed like the candidate most acceptable to all sides.

But the Xu Estate soon received a letter from Holy Maiden Peak, causing its gates to slam shut and Xu Shiji to plead illness.

Everyone understood this to be the Holy Maiden, so they naturally had no means to force the issue.

The person finally chosen as commander-in-chief was extremely surprising.

When the Imperial Court's decree was circulated throughout the

empire, many people felt like they had never even heard the name.

Divine General He Ming, the former commander of the black-armored cavalry, was an incredibly inconspicuous character. One could even call him utterly obscure.

But he had sufficient qualifications and though he was a disciple of Chen Guansong, he was not at all close with Peng Shihai and the other generals from Star Seizer Academy. Moreover, in the battle of the Orthodox Academy ten years ago, he had led the black-armored heavy cavalry until he was stopped on the edge of the collapsed Mount Mo. His performance then had been very mature and steady, gaining the admiration of both the Emperor and the Pope.

To put it in other words, the most important reason for his assignment as commander-in-chief was that the various factions could accept him and he himself did not belong to any faction.

The problem was that this meant that he was neither Chen Changsheng's man nor the emperor's.

Even the most mature and steady of individuals might start having other thoughts once they began to wield great authority.

On the bitter fields of war, ambition would often grow alongside courage.

Thus, Xu Yourong would not leave this place.

.....

.....

The shadow of death finally left the plains.

Perhaps the demons had run out of that medicine that could stimulate one's hidden potential and wipe away one's fear of death, or perhaps Xuelao City finally found it hard to endure the vast number of deaths suffered by the low-class demons. But in short, on one early summer day, the human armies ceased to see those

red-eyed, beast-like demon soldiers charging toward them.

As the demon armies retreated, a battle would occur here and there. It was obvious that these demon soldiers had not taken the medicine. Although they were still rather dumb, they no longer dared to charge straight into a rain of crossbow bolts, and they were certainly no longer fearless of death.

The plains were covered in different hues of blood, and when this blood dried, it would leave massive patches of color. From a distance, it looked like some sort of painting.

He Ming gazed at that painting on the plains. He recalled the words of that bishop invited by Chen Guansong from the Li Palace when they were studying demon culture and history.

"The demons are just this sort of strange species. The lower-class demons are not much different from birds or beasts, but the high-class demons possess an unimaginable appreciation for art. And these two are not completely isolated from each other. In fact, they exist closely with each other, influencing each other. Thus, in the paintings of Xuelao City, one would often see seemingly crude large patches of color..."

If the dukes and nobles of Xuelao City could drive around the lower-class demons like they were beasts and monsters, this war might become even crueler. If the demi-humans had still been the slaves of the demons, there would have been no chance of winning this war.

One had to thank Emperor Taizong for his enlightened decision.

As he looked to the capital, Divine General He Ming felt a similar sentiment for the Pope.

The opening phase of this war had been particularly bitter, far surpassing their initial expectations.

From a certain perspective, this was a clash of resources, resolve and wills between the Human and Demon races that had been

building up for the last one thousand years.

This clash ultimately rested on two specific medicines.

The demons had used the poison developed by the Longevity Sect. Given the amount that they had, Xuelao City had probably been preparing for this war for many, many years.

On the human side, the Cinnabar Pills that Pope Chen Changsheng had strenuously worked to stockpile over the last ten years had basically all been used up.

Now, the war was entering its second phase, and also its second-to-last.

The human armies continued to incessantly push northward, following the routed demon armies and breaking through two defensive lines. The plains had completely fallen to the Human race.

The temperature gradually climbed as summer set in. Midsummer had come, but the plains were vast, and the mountains before them that extended for several thousand li had many openings. The wind blowing through them meant that the army garrisoned here would not find the heat too unbearable. In the early morning, they might even feel somewhat chilly.

Early one morning, a swift red dot appeared in the overcast sky, dragging a streak of red behind it. It was probably a Red Falcon.

The moment the Red Falcon flew past the summit of a mountain, two vigilant sentinels noticed and blew on their warning bugles.

A party of cavalry swiftly departed the camp, though it was hard to say if their mission was to ensure the safety of the intelligence report or to pick something up.

The Red Falcon had probably discovered enemy positions around that mountain. Even though that imposing mountain several dozen li away had already been combed through many times and should have been free of ambushers, this was still demon territory,

and no one knew what sort of strange methods they might have.

The Red Falcon was flying extremely fast and didn't appear tired, but as it flew over a nearby precipitous cliff, it suddenly descended.

What was on that cliff?

A figure suddenly appeared out of a pile of rubble and lunged like a bolt of lightning toward the plain and the human camp.

This was a disciple from the Ten Thousand Years Pavilion, famed for its swift movement techniques. His assignment was the most dangerous advance guard.

When the Ten Thousand Years Pavilion disciple was still several li away, he suddenly groaned and dropped to the ground.

"Crossbows!"

A furious and sharp command issued out of the camp, followed by the twanging of crossbow strings. Several hundred crossbow bolts tipped with a divine radiance tore through the dim morning light. They rained down behind the fallen disciple, pockmarking a circle with a radius of several dozen zhang in a dense collection of holes, causing smoke to rise from them.

The human armies were already well-experienced. Those demon soldiers skilled in pursuit would often strike from out of the ground.

The party of cavalry quickly reached the Ten Thousand Years Pavilion disciple.

One of the disciple's legs was covered in blood. It was evident that it had been severed.

He seemed to not care; all his mind was focused on shouting, "There are demons in the mountains! It's not possible to determine what tribe they belong to, but there are a lot!"

The cavalry pulled him onto a horse and turned back to camp.

No one noticed that three cavalry continued to gallop toward the

distant mountain, their mission unknown.

.....

.....

The morning mountain had still not awakened, and the cliffs that faced the human army were gloomy and dark.

Suddenly, the voices of demons began to rise from the cliffs, though it was impossible to tell exactly where they came from.

The soldiers had searched the mountain many times, so why had they never discovered any sign of these demons?

In the center of the several-hundred-zhang-high cliff were several dozen tiny caves. Much less demon soldiers, not even the thinnest human soldiers could squeeze inside.

During their searches, the humans had believed these caves to be bird caves and so paid them little attention.

They had not expected their foes to be hidden in precisely these caves.

Because their foes were not demon soldiers, but birds.

They were a sort of black vulture.

Several thousand black vultures poured out of those tiny caves and flew into the sky.

It was clear that these vultures had been trained, perhaps were even being directly controlled. So orderly were they that even when they flew into the sky, they still did not scatter.

The three cavalymen were still a distance from the mountain. They appeared rather confused as they looked up at the sky, wondering. Even if these vultures had been trained to attack targets on the ground, to expect the sharp vulture claws to inflict losses on the human camp was just a tad delusional.

At this moment, the first ray of the morning sun emerged from

the cracks in the mountains and fell on the plains.

The sudden light caused a vulture to panic and loosen its claws, causing a black object to drop.

With a boom, the grass in front of the cliff was engulfed by raging flame.

At this sight, the three cavalrymen glanced at each other with shock in their eyes. But instead of slowing, they hurried to the mountain even faster.

An interesting fact: the chapter title, 鸟山明, in Japanese is the name of the author of the manga 'Dragon Ball', Toriyama Akira.

Chapter 1141 – The Heaven Shrouding Sword

The light of the fire in front of the mountain simultaneously alarmed the human camp.

The soldiers were roused from their dreams. Grasping their weapons, they began to run to their positions.

The array masters worked as quickly as possible to complete the preparations to activate the array. The ranks of eight hundred crossbowmen were also completely moved to the front of the camp.

This was the North Third Camp, commanded by Divine General Peng Shihai.

He gazed indifferently at the several thousand vultures blanketing the sky, his voice firm and steady as ten-some orders neatly issued from his lips.

Only the aides standing near him noticed that their general's fists were tightly clenched, the knuckles going white.

It was not out of fear, but anger and concern.

If each vulture was carrying this kind of explosive weapon, what sort of trial would the North Third Camp have to endure?

The array laid out by the array masters could cover half the camp, but it could not possibly last long against such a fearsome fire.

As for the crossbows, they could shoot down a group of vultures, but given the speed at which the vultures flew, by the time the crossbow bolts struck them, they would already be flying over the camp. What difference would it make then, whether they dropped the explosives of their own accord or were shot down?

.....

.....

"It would be fine if Master were here!"

One of the cavalrymen shouted as he climbed up the cliff.

Another cavalryman shook his head and said, "Even if Master were here, he wouldn't necessarily be able to kill all these birds."

The third cavalryman said nothing. His entire body exuded a cold Qi, his killing intent soaring to the heavens.

In his view, the North Third Camp would assuredly turn into a sea of fire today. Even if the array could last for a few moments, grievous losses were a certainty, and the swift wolf cavalry of the Demon race were probably waiting north of the mountains to strike. In other words, there was no way to prevent this defeat.

Thus, he had to at least kill the director of these vultures so as to avoid such a defeat happening in the future.

Able to climb such a steep cliff and think about such things, he and his two fellow cavalrymen were naturally not ordinary soldiers.

But even if they were powerful cultivators, there were still many things on the battlefield that they were incapable of changing.

A burst of screeches exploded in the sky.

The three cavalrymen subconsciously stopped and turned to look at the human camp. They were greeted by a completely unexpected sight.

Streams of blue light spread out over the plains, ultimately forming an array that covered the front half of the camp.

Even from such a distance, they could still see the light glimmering from the Sacred Light crossbows.

The human army waited to receive the onslaught.

But before the vultures were even able to fly over the camp, they began to drop from the sky!

It was like some invisible and mysterious strength had appeared in front of the vultures, frightening them and depriving them of the strength to flap their wings.

The several thousand vultures dropped from the sky like rain, crashing down to the plains into a magnificent plume of flame that soared to the heavens.

"What's going on here?"

One of the cavalrymen shouted in delight.

The frosty cavalryman yelled, "Faster!"

The three cavalrymen were energized at the fact that the camp was fine. They climbed to those caves in the center of the cliff as swiftly as flying swans!

As they arrived in front of those caves, the three people sensed the dark and cold Qi seeping out. They knew that the demon freak was probably still inside. They acted without any hesitation, their longswords crisply humming out of their sheaths. Coldly gleaming, the swords shot into the caves and began to thread through with unimaginable speed.

There was no sound at first, but then there was an abrupt thump, quickly followed by incessant hacking sounds mixed with cries of pain and curses in Demon language. Soon, that demon freak were repeating only one phrase, uttered in panic and fear.

After some time, the cliff finally fell quiet.

Three icy swords flew out from the caves and back to their sheaths.

The sun had risen higher, so the morning light reflected off a nearby mountain back onto this cliff, shining upon the faces of the three cavalrymen.

One face was composed and calm, one was determined and proud, and the last was young and intelligent. It was Liang Banhu,

Guan Feibai, and Bai Cai.

Bai Cai curiously asked, "What was that demon freak shouting before they died?"

Liang Banhu and Guan Feibai glanced at each other and laughed.

Guan Feibai's smile faded as he sternly asked, "Eldest Brother told you to study up on Demon language, so why didn't you listen?"

Chagrined, Bai Cai replied, "There are more than one hundred kinds of Demon language, so how could I learn them all?"

.....

.....

Cries of surprise rose from all over the plains.

This was because all the camps were in similar circumstances.

The demons were not counterattacking with a large army. Instead, they launched countless raids simultaneously.

These raids were better described as surprise attacks. All the bizarre strategies of the Demon race were displayed, and they had dispatched many of their experts.

This was the first time since the start of the war that the demons had used their experts in battle.

But just like in the first phase, once they used them, it was an all-out assault without the slightest leeway!

The demons had more than three thousand tribes, and the tribes with powerful fighting forces numbered no less than a hundred.

Today, the elders and strongest warriors of these tribes burst out of the plains or flew out from the cliffs, ferocious visages stamped on their faces.

The beast tamers from the remote Snow Lake directed monsters in suicidal assaults.

The unappreciated wandering warriors from the slums of Xuelao

City tore off the beast furs covering their bodies, took up their heavy demon axes, and leapt out from the monster herds.

The goal of these experts was exceptionally clear and had clearly been targeted beforehand. It was the rations, array masters, and commanders of the human armies.

Several hundred small-scale battles were simultaneously initiated on the plains. Although it might not have a large effect on the entire war, it succeeded in producing mass chaos.

And a clear and callous intention often lurked behind the chaos.

As the morning sun rose over the horizon—though its light refracted by the grass and mountains only seemed to make the world gloomier—the true intentions of the demons were finally revealed.

Several hundred experts of the Demon Army, clad in a somber Qi, concealed beneath an array able to obscure the eyes of heaven, came to a place not even twenty li from the Human race's Central Army Camp.

The heaven-obscuring array caused the clouds in the sky to gather. Rain began to fall, and the drops falling on the faces of the soldiers felt rather light and empty.

This was the strength of laws. Had an expert of the Divine Domain arrived?

Commander-in-Chief He Ming was an inconspicuous and composed person, but in certain respects, he was extremely adventurous, even radical.

He had established the Central Army Camp at the very forefront of the front lines, only a hundred-some li from the mountain called [Nuorilang](#).

At this crucial moment, there was no need to hold anything back. The human experts finally struck.

Sacred Light, white and searing, illuminated the gloomy world, tearing open those cottony clouds and revealing a corner of the blue sky.

Mao Qiuyu and Daoist nun Huai Ren walked out from the Central Army Camp. With a sweep of their sleeves, they slew ten-some demon experts.

No one was astonished.

Even these demon experts who had been essentially sent to their deaths had long expected this end.

How could the most important Central Army Camp not have experts of the Divine Domain standing sentinel?

The demons had already foreseen this, so they had naturally made the appropriate arrangements.

The sky suddenly dimmed.

The blue sky disappeared while a black and damaged chessboard moved in and out of the faint clouds.

At the base of Mount Nuorilang, a black path manifested over the deserted plains.

The edges of this path were quite ragged, tattered like a randomly torn piece of paper.

This was actually a rather appropriate description, because this was a path torn out from space by the Demon race's terrifying great array.

Several Demon Generals and several thousand wolf cavalry charged from a valley several hundred li away toward the Central Army Camp.

As the clouds thickened, they obscured the sunlight, seeming to bring the night down early. Two massive figures loomed within them.

One was presumably a member of the Council of Elders, the other

a duke of Xuelao City.

Mao Qiuyu and Huai Ren appeared unaffected, their expressions remaining very calm.

Since the demons were able to foresee their presence, they were naturally able to imagine that the demons had made the appropriate arrangements.

Late last night, they had seen through the Fated Star Plate the possibility of that path appearing.

Up to now, nothing new had happened, nothing exceeding their expectations.

Suddenly, Huai Ren's eyes turned grave.

Mao Qiuyu's sleeves began to move despite the lack of wind.

A massive black silhouette suddenly appeared at the peak of Mount Nuorilang.

Unlike the Demon Generals and the wolf cavalry, the black silhouette had not used the path leading to the valley. It had just suddenly appeared on the summit.

The world grew even gloomier, but quite a few of the clouds in front of the peak were blown away, revealing the true appearance of that giant figure.

It was an extremely rare monster from a primordial era, the Mountain-toppling Fiend. It had a long mouth and coiled horns, making it seem utterly demonic. It was around forty-some zhang tall.

A thin and short demon, shorter even than a human child, sat in the coiled horns of the Mountain-toppling Fiend. It was dressed in armor, the helmet engraved with golden threads that formed a complicated design. Dark green objects were embedded in the armor. Some of them were green jewels, but others were copper rusted by time.

A Qi of unimaginable terror oozed out from the chinks in the armor, but it was still far inferior to the cruelty and evil in this demon's gaze.

When this demon appeared on the peak, the world for hundreds of li around it fell silent for a moment.

Because she was the Demon Commander.

After this briefest of silences came shrill howls and cries of bloodlust.

Several thousand wolf cavalry almost madly charged to the Central Army Camp.

Because the Demon Commander had arrived.

It was obvious that if the Central Army Camp was to be defended, the prerequisite was to defeat, or at least block, the Demon Commander.

When the old Demon Lord was still alive, she was the unquestionable second strongest of the snowy plains.

Now that the old Demon Lord was dead, could she not be called the strongest demon?

No one knew the answer, because Mountain Man Yanzhi had been in seclusion, because Black Robe had never fully showed her strength, even today.

But there was one thing that was certain.

The Demon Commander was not an ordinary expert of the Divine Domain.

If Chen Changsheng were here, he might have recalled that when Su Li was lying in the hot springs, he had once described the Demon Commander as a mutant.

If even Su Li regarded her as a mutant, one could imagine just how cruel and powerful the Demon Commander was.

Mao Qiuyu was well aware that he was no match for the Demon Commander, and Huai Ren had been a Divine Domain cultivator for an even shorter time, so who could stop her?

.....

.....

A sword glow came from the south.

This sword glow was chilling and clear. It was like actual water.

This sword glow washed away the haze in the sky, drowned the howls on the plains. It seemed unhurried, but it slashed with hidden killing intent at the peak.

A plume of black smoke suddenly rose from the charging wolf cavalry. The Eighth Demon General flew through the sky, treasure in hand as he hurtled toward the sword glow.

The sword glow was like a reflection in the water. It trembled for a moment before circling around.

There was a swish as a clear sword slash appeared on the Eighth Demon General's armor, fire pouring out from within.

This unbearable pain caused even this Demon General famed for his endurance to howl in fury.

As the angry howl resonated over the plains, yet another plume of black smoke rose from the wolf cavalry, its momentum comparable to the first. Demonic Qi surged into the sky, finally managing to hold off the sword glow.

The occasional flash from the sword glow illuminated the black smoke while the rending of metal sporadically came from within.

The Third Demon General had finally succeeded in blocking the sword glow. His helmet was covered in slashes and a small part of his horn had been cut off, blood bubbling forth from the wound.

One sword glow had unexpectedly required two high-class Demon Generals to block it, and they had been left in terrible

condition, both of them suffering injury.

It was different from Su Li's sharpness and freedom, and it also was not Chen Changsheng's straightness and determination.

This sword was calmer, gentler, but it was not lacking in sharpness. It left behind no traces, unfathomable and exquisite to the extreme.

There was a tent to the side of the camp used to store miscellany.

An old Daoist walked out from this tent.

His right hand held a sword while his left gripped a sheath. Neither the way in which he walked nor the way he gripped the sword could be described as beautiful, and they certainly couldn't be described as unearthly. But a perceptive person could see that his sword was an extraordinary object. It seemed to have been washed in autumn waters for three thousand years, so bright that it was impossible to look at directly. It desired to shroud the world before everyone's eyes, including the heavens and earth.

Was this the legendary Heaven Shrouding Sword?

And was this ordinary old Daoist the Sect Master of the Mount Li Sword Sect?

The officers and soldiers were flabbergasted as they gradually began to yield the path.

Mao Qiuyu and Huai Ren slightly bent at the waist in a bow.

In Tibetan, Nuorilang means 'grand and magnificent'. In China, it is used as the name for two geographic features within the Chinese National Park of Jiuzhaigou, the Nuorilang Waterfall and the Nuorilang Lakes.

Chapter 1142 – Wang Po Has Come

The two Demon Generals on the plains and the even more powerful demon elder and duke all became abnormally grave.

The remnants of the sword intent drifted to the peak of Mount Nuorilang.

The Demon Commander snatched at it with her hand and brought it up to her nose. Upon sniffing it, she began to feel slightly wary.

The Mount Li Sword Sect Master had broken through ten-some years ago, but not much attention had been paid to him. Many people thought that this old Daoist who had never walked past the mountain gate had only relied on the supreme teachings of the Mount Li Sword Sect and several hundred years of bitter cultivation to barely break through into the Divine Domain. It really hadn't been considered much of a feat.

No one had expected his cultivation in the sword to have reached such an astonishing level that he had already walked up to the second threshold.

Mao Qiuyu looked at the Mount Li Sect Master and said, "We've troubled Sir today."

The Mount Li Sect Master glanced at Mount Nuorilang and waved his hand. "I certainly cannot beat this villain."

Without waiting for Mao Qiuyu to speak, he pointed at the two Demon Generals on the plains and said, "These two can't beat me, so let me handle them."

Mao Qiuyu and Huai Ren were slightly stunned, both at how magnanimous these words seemed to be, and also at who would now deal with the Demon Commander.

There was no more time to think. The mists in that path in the darkness were getting thicker and thicker, those several massive

figures growing increasingly distinct.

The demon elder and duke of Xuelao City were about to arrive on the battlefield. If no one stopped them, the Central Army Camp would come under their direct assault.

Drifting in the breeze, Huai Ren flew to meet the silk-robed duke. Mao Qiuyu's sleeves fluttered as he went to block the member of the Council of Elders.

The Mount Li Sect Master raised the sword in his right hand, tightened his left hand's grip on the sheath, and stepped on a rainbow as he went to confront the two Demon Generals.

Expert after expert of the Divine Domain stepped onto the battlefield, their powerful Qis constantly clashing, stirring winds and sending dust into the air.

A sword glow cleaved apart everything between the heavens and the earth, after which the light of the sun illuminated the plains.

Demon Breath, as thick as the darkness, gushed out from the valley. Like a true dragon from the abyss, it swallowed up the sword glow.

The heavens and earth were overturned, and the entire world dimmed.

These unfathomably mystical sights alternated between the heavens and earth. Several of the mountains in Mount Nuorilang's vicinity were flattened and golden blood dripped down from the sky, igniting in the wind, exuding heat and holy rays of light. The blood of the demon experts, on the other hand, was like ink, painting the sky even darker.

In this extremely short time, it seemed like day had interchanged with night countless times.

The human armies were barely able to rely on their arrays to endure the ripples produced by the clash between experts of the Divine Domain. Occasionally the military experts and

crossbowmen within wanted to help the human Divine Domain experts, but they were unable to break free of the harassment from the wolf cavalry.

The Demon Commander remained uninvolved throughout, her cold and cruel gaze piercing through her helmet as it looked southward. She seemed to be waiting for someone.

A hundred-some li to the west was the most dangerously positioned right camp of the Western Army.

To the surprise of all, the most important individual of the Western Army, the Prince of Xiang, had not remained in the rear and had disregarded the Cong Province Army, choosing to remain encamped here.

The streams of light in front of Mount Nuorilang were clearly visible against the sky. Although they were a hundred-some li away, they seemed to be right in front of his eyes.

The Prince of Xiang took his hands off his portly belly, his eyes squinting in thought as he observed those sword glows and demonic Qis.

If he had left as soon as the battle had begun, he might have been in time to participate in this rare melee of Divine Domain experts.

But he did not do so. In his view, the battle was still far from reaching the most critical point, and the most critical person had still not arrived.

Yes, just like the Demon Commander, he was also waiting for that person to arrive.

.....

.....

"He's here! He's here!"

Elated cries rose from the rear of the Central Army Camp.

Like sparks landing on oil, these cries quickly spread through the

entire camp and on to the entire battlefield.

Both the human soldiers and the wolf cavalry desperately attempting to break in had heard the voice.

He was here.

He had finally come.

The wind howled.

Gravel slapped against the grass.

A person appeared before everyone's eyes. He was dressed in a faded cloth gown, and he had a downtrodden appearance. He appeared like an accountant who owed a great deal of money.

Wang Po had come.

No one knew where he had been a moment before.

No one knew where he had come from.

It was not the Central Army Camp. He did not have a habit of standing by the commander-in-chief.

It was also not amongst the miscellany. He did not have the energy to treat life as a game.

He had walked from the south.

To the south was the world of humans.

As usual, his shoulders were drooped, making it easier for him to grip his blade.

The plains were currently in chaos, and desperate fights in which life and death stared off against each other were taking place everywhere. The shouts of fighting and groans of pain rose and fell while the wind and dust obscured the eyes of many.

In this vast and complicated drawing, Wang Po was just an unremarkable dot that should have passed completely unnoticed.

But when he walked from the south, everyone, even the demon

soldiers and experts, saw him.

He was dressed in such an impoverished manner and had such an ordinary demeanor, but even in the most dazzling of worlds, he would still have a most powerful presence.

Yet the Demon Commander closed her eyes.

The temperature on the summit abruptly plunged, blanketing the black rocks in a thin layer of white frost.

Against an opponent like Wang Po, even someone like her had to be cautious, meeting him with all her strength.

Wang Po seemed to walk without haste, but he quickly traversed the human camp and reached the battlefield.

The situation was abnormally complex. The unexpected could come at any time, bringing with it many variables and dangers.

But Wang Po did not hurry his steps or alter his trajectory. He continued to calmly walk forward.

The Demon Commander had closed her eyes to accumulate energy in preparation for their coming clash. It was certain to be a thunderous strike that would shake the heavens.

Wang Po was no stranger to this.

At Tanzhe Temple on the outskirts of the capital, he had sat under that ginkgo tree for ten-some days and nights, his blade never leaving its sheath. He had been comprehending the blade while simultaneously accumulating blade energy.

Only this method had allowed him to slay Tie Shu with a single strike of his blade.

Now, as he walked toward the mountain, he was also accumulating energy.

.....

.....

The method by which Demon Generals were ranked was similar to that of the Divine Generals of the Great Zhou. While seniority and reputation would be considered, the most important quality was still absolute strength.

Xin Dijia was currently the Third Demon General. He was enormously powerful, and none of the current Divine Generals of the Great Zhou were any match for him. He was also deeply trusted by the young Demon Lord, who had granted him several formidable demon artifacts. He could be considered a true expert of the Divine Domain.

The sword glow had managed to shear off a small part of his horn and leave him many wounds because the Mount Li Sect Master's sword technique truly had been rather profound, but also because he had somewhat underestimated his foe.

And he had not expected this old Daoist's sword to be so horrifyingly sharp.

His injuries just now had sobered him and made him much more cautious. Together with the Eighth Demon General and several experts of the Demon Army, he calmly engaged in battle with the Mount Li Sect Master.

He saw Wang Po walking through the battlefield, but he could not escape the reach of the Mount Li Sect Master's sword intent. He whistled, ordering the wolf cavalry to charge at Wang Po. At the same time, he used his gaze to request the Eighth Demon General to work with him and bring their battle to the center of the battlefield.

No matter how terrifying the wolf cavalry were, they couldn't possibly injure Wang Po. The Third Demon General understood, and he only hoped that they could stop Wang Po from gathering energy.

In a battle on the level of Wang Po versus the Demon Commander, even the smallest effects could directly decide the

outcome.

The Mount Li Sect Master guessed at what this Demon General was up to. His long brows rose as he lightly flicked his fingers.

At this moment, the Heaven Shrouding Sword was shattering its third demon artifact and drenching the Eighth Demon General in blood. Suddenly, it was struck by the gust of wind created by that finger flick, causing it to crisply hum.

This sword music was extremely clear and cold, and it could be heard across the entire plain.

Several seemingly ordinary soldiers crossed the chaotic battlefield to Wang Po's side.

The wolf cavalry began to charge.

The eyes of the giant wolves were thoroughly dyed in madness while the demon soldiers on their backs let out grating howls.

Several awe-inspiring sword intents shot into the sky and slashed at the wolf cavalry.

Those ordinary soldiers were actually all elders of Mount Li's Sword Hall!

Cold swords flashed and wolf cavalry crashed to the ground, splashing blood and filth.

These several elders of the Sword Hall walked with Wang Po like bodyguards.

No matter which direction the wolf cavalry charged from, they would all be slain.

These elders wanted to ensure that Wang Po would not be disturbed.

They did not care that this might affect their own ability to attack, might even cause them to be injured.

They could not allow anyone to force Wang Po to act before his

battle with the Demon Commander began.

To many people, this was a strategy carried out for the sake of the overarching situation.

But Wang Po had never been a person who could accept the good intentions of others with peace of mind.

If he were, how could his blade be as powerful as it was today?

To the west of him, on the plains, Daoist nun Huai Ren was battling with that member of the Demon Council of Elders.

Exquisite and somber streams of energy were shooting out from her fingers like arrows, flying through the sky, shattering several dozen Essence Qi Locks and leaving deep, bloody holes in the demon elder's body.

The Divine Finger of the Worldstream was truly nothing to be laughed off, especially when it was being used by an expert of the Divine Domain.

The demon elder hissed. Stretching out his hands, he snatched the scepters from the hands of two tribal elders and absorbed the souls attached to them, causing his injuries to instantly recover.

Moreover, his body began to swell until he was ten-some zhang high. Draped in the darkness, he seemed liked both demon and god.

It was at this moment that the clear clang of metal came from the distance.

This was the grinding of metal, the blade leaving its sheath!

The demon elder's expression instantly changed. He knew that there was no time to escape, so he screamed in despair and toppled toward Huai Ren like a mountain!

A blade intent that seemed to come from beyond the heavens tore a hole through the darkness.

With several crisp cracks, the demon elder's shoulders gained

several wounds.

A sunlight-drenched horsetail whisk, its silky threads bunching into clouds, crashed against the demon elder's chest.

The demon elder instantly shattered into black powder. His remains sprinkled over the grass in a radius of several li, withering anything they touched!

Huai Ren's face was pale, blood trickling out of the corner of her lips.

She turned to the center of the battlefield.

Wang Po was still walking to the mountain as if he had done nothing at all.

Many gazes dropped to his waist.

His hand was already gripping his sheath.

His thumb was pressed against the bottom of the hilt.

A part of the blade had already been revealed.

Chapter 1143 – Fighting the Demon Commander

At the summit of Mount Nuorilang...

The Demon Commander sat in the coiled horns of the Mountain-toppling Fiend, her eyes closed as if she was asleep.

Other than rusted green copper, the chinks in her armor also played host to frosty white.

She had already brought her Qi to its peak condition. Even the mountain was expressing its servitude.

She naturally wasn't sleeping. She was listening to the battlefield.

She heard the sword of Mount Li, the sleeve of the Li Palace, and the slender fingers of South Stream Temple, but none of this moved her.

Then, she heard the sound of a blade leaving its sheath and instantly opened her eyes.

"He's actually so confident?"

Many years ago, not far outside Xuelao City, Black Robe had organized a lethal trap against Su Li.

At the crucial moment, Chen Changsheng had come out from the Garden of Zhou, sending the Yellow Paper Umbrella into Su Li's hands.

Su Li had gripped the hilt and a Demon General several dozen li away was heavily injured.

Su Li had pulled the sword half out of its sheath and Black Robe was forced to retreat.

Wang Po today had some of Su Li's style from back then, even though he had not directly attacked yet.

But the Demon Commander was still perplexed, as the demon who had died just now was an expert of the Divine Domain. Wang Po had probably consumed no small amount of energy to pull off this feat. Was he not worried that this might affect his battle with her?

.....

.....

There was a tear on his front lapel, causing it to flutter in the wind. It made walking inconvenient, so a blade intent cut it away, letting it float like a tailless kite into the distance.

Wang Po recalled Xiao Zhang and he thought to himself, I wonder where that awful-tempered fellow is right now. I can only hope that he didn't go to Xuelao City alone.

He turned to look at the other side of the plains.

Another battle was taking place there.

The Mount Li Sect Master waved his sleeve and said, "I'm fine here."

Although he was ten-some li away, his voice was so clear that it seemed like he was standing in front of Wang Po.

Wang Po nodded and continued forward.

The Third and Eighth Demon Generals abruptly put away their weapons and retreated some distance.

Three pitch-black demon artifacts exuded a frigid aura. They flew in the sky over them, observing their surroundings.

The Mount Li Sect Master froze for a moment, his white brows rising. He chose to retreat a distance as well.

At the same time, the human cavalry and the wolf cavalry retreated to their respective sides.

Two giant wolves too agitated by the scent of blood were

unwilling to listen to orders, so their riders ended up swiftly beheading them.

A path several li wide appeared in the center of the plains.

It stretched from the plains to the summit of Mount Nuorilang.

This path was absolutely empty, absolutely quiet.

The battle elsewhere continued.

The silence seemed particularly bizarre.

The Demon Commander had opened her eyes, indicating that she was ready.

Wang Po's blade was already ready to fully be unsheathed.

Now that the battle had reached this point, it could no longer be stopped, no longer be disturbed.

The Demon Commander was the strongest of all the demons, a matter publicly acknowledged across the entirety of the demon domain.

In terms of seniority, Wang Po could not compare himself to the other experts of the Divine Domain, yet he was unquestionably the commanding general of the Human race.

The battle between the two of them was, in some ways, a symbol of the war between the humans and demons.

It was only right that this battle be given all respect.

This also meant that neither side was allowed to lose.

.....

.....

Wang Po gazed at the mountain several dozen li away.

Mount Nuorilang was black, but it now had a head of white.

In a short time, the summit had been blanketed in a thick mantle of snow.

This was the manifestation of the Demon Commander's will to fight, cold and extremely arrogant.

Wang Po had left a trail of footprints behind him in the plains.

That was his path.

Just like the path of his blade, it was absolutely straight.

Wang Po disappeared.

When he next appeared, he was ten-some li away, in the air.

The Demon Commander did not wait at the peak for him.

The Mountain-toppling Fiend, several dozen zhang tall, let out a roar of pain.

Its nose spurted out warm mists while its feet crushed out a spider web of cracks on the mountain top.

The snow flurried into the air.

The Demon Commander jumped into the sky. With a flip of her hands, she gripped a blade.

This was a massive, curved blade.

The blade gleamed, but its edge was lined with condensed darkness.

No one could have expected a dwarf like her to wield this curved blade as a weapon. So exaggerated was its size that it was more than three times her height!

The Demon Commander fell from the sky, the curved blade in her hands slicing at Wang Po!

Wang Po flipped his hand and pulled out his blade, his forearm straightening. Just like on the Luo River, he slashed with his blade!

Boom!

There was a massive explosion.

The darkness that had crept out from the valley suddenly swayed

like a black curtain or an inky sea.

Several thousand plumes of dust rose from the cliffs and plains.

For a radius of several hundred li around the battlefield, the human and demon soldiers all covered their ears in shock, expressions of pain on their faces.

Even though all their eyes were red from bloodlust, they were forced to stop fighting for a moment.

And for the two-hundred-some wolf cavalry closest to the clash, they were jolted to death before they even had time to yelp!

The Demon Commander was jolted back to Mount Nuorilang, where she neatly returned to her seat amidst the Mountain-topping Fiend's coiled horns.

Rolling seven-hundred-some times through the air had left her complexion wan, though this was mostly obscured by her helmet and the designs and jewels embedded on it.

Wang Po landed back on the plains, ten-some unfathomably deep cracks spreading from his feet into the distance.

"HAHAHAHAHA!"

Hoarse and unpleasant laughter came out of the Demon Commander's helmet.

It was particularly brash and arrogant laughter. It almost felt like one could see the hideous smile on her face.

"Everyone says that you're a genius of the Human race that's not even guaranteed to appear once in a generation, but it seems to me that you're not much at all!"

Wang Po did not reply.

His hand was trembling.

A deep cut had been made on the edge of the blade.

Just who had lost?

Was it Wang Po?

The Demon Commander's laughter suddenly stopped.

There was a dull squelch.

It was the sound that the performers on the streets of the capital made when they spit fire...

Countless streams of blood gushed out from the chinks in her helmet.

It was extremely dark blood, dyed with a bizarre dark green.

For many years, some people had suspected that the Demon Commander was a member of the Imperial clan. Today, their conjectures finally received proof.

But why was her blood mixed with dark green?

For the moment, no one considered this question.

What had happened just now had left them speechless.

The Demon Commander had been so heavily injured that she vomited blood!

"You truly are very strong, perhaps even surpassing Bie Yanghong before his death."

The Demon Commander's voice had deepened, but it was still just as unpleasant to hear.

"Although you are still no match for this commander, this commander must admit that it will be very difficult to kill you today."

To the demons, killing Wang Po was even more important than killing the human commander-in-chief.

Since completing this mission was impossible, since she had also suffered significant injuries, what purpose was there in staying?

An order was issued from the peak of Mount Nuorilang to the plains. The wolf cavalry began to order themselves in preparation

to pull back.

The Mount Li Sect Master glanced at Wang Po. Mao Qiuyu and Huai Ren also looked at Wang Po.

What they did next would depend on Wang Po's will.

As long as Wang Po nodded, the Mount Li Sect Master's Heaven Shrouding Sword would head to the summit of Mount Nuorilang.

Huai Ren was heavily injured, but she could probably delay that duke of Xuelao City who Mao Qiuyu had injured.

Mao Qiuyu's mission would be to keep the Third and Eighth Demon Generals on the plain.

If they did this, perhaps they really did have a chance to kill the Demon Commander.

It looked simple, but it was actually extremely complicated to pull off this switching of targets.

These human experts needed only a glance to decide upon this arrangement.

The wind blew against the cloth gown, causing it to flap in the air.

Wang Po did not nod, nor did he do anything else, not even the tiniest of twitches. He was like a stone statue.

He did not want to give any wrong signal to Mao Qiuyu and the others, because the consequences would be extremely severe.

Mao Qiuyu and the others understood what he meant. They were worried and regretful, but they still relaxed.

It was at this very moment that the darkness surging out from the valley suddenly thinned.

Because the sun in the sky had become incomparably bright!

A figure appeared in the blazing sunlight, crashing down toward the Demon Commander like a falling star.

The Prince of Xiang!

In his view, this was the best chance to kill the Demon Commander. No matter what, it could not be let go!

At this sight, Wang Po's expression instantly changed.

Chapter 1144 – Preposterous Order

The water gurgled, the wooden ladle drifting over it. The Green Leaf had still not returned. Tonight's dinner was still very simple.

Chen Changsheng and Gou Hanshi were eating faster than usual. For the former, this was quite the rare occurrence.

From this detail, one could imagine just how important the documents they needed to discuss tonight were.

The plates on their desks were cleared away and An Hua brought them some green orange water for them to rinse their mouths, presented with scalding hot towels.

A small mountain of documents was piled up in the corner of the hall. The ones they needed to see had already been picked out and organized.

The hall remained silent throughout the night. Chen Changsheng and Gou Hanshi read the documents in their hands, saying nothing for a very long time.

They had been informed of the conclusion of that battle long ago, but it was only now that they were learning of many details.

No one could have expected that the Prince of Xiang would silently cast off the thirty thousand soldiers of the Western Army Right Camp and hide all alone near the peak of Mount Nuorilang.

With both the Demon Commander and Wang Po heavily injured, he leapt out of the sun and unleashed the strongest attack of his entire life.

If this sneak attack succeeded, his leaving the camp without being ordered naturally wouldn't be a big deal, and he would have the greatest achievement since the start of this war.

The Prince of Xiang could exchange this achievement for Prince Chen Liu's departure from the capital, or he could redeem it for an

honor like the Iron Ticket of Redemption. Both would have been extremely easy. (TN: The Iron Ticket of Redemption, 免死铁券, was a reward bestowed during the Ming Dynasty. If a minister committed a crime, they could use the Iron Ticket of Redemption to save them from the death penalty.) Perhaps it was precisely with these things in mind that the Prince of Xiang had taken such a risky and fearless action.

Alas, he still underestimated the strength of the Demon Commander.

Wang Po was heavily injured and unable to join in the assault.

The Demon Commander had also taken significant injuries, but she was not burned to death by that searing sun.

The darkness in the valley had served as her weapon at the crucial moment.

Those who witnessed this were so shocked that they were powerless to speak.

The Prince of Xiang was unwilling to retreat, so his sneak attack became a forceful assault.

The Demon Commander paid the Mountain-toppling Fiend as the price to escape the summit of Mount Nuorilang.

The Prince of Xiang stood on the head of the dead Mountain-toppling Fiend and watched the Demon Commander escape to the north. His confidence surging, his forceful assault became a pursuit.

He pursued for six hundred li, but he still failed to kill the Demon Commander. Black Robe had set up an array, and four high-ranking Demon Generals were waiting for him.

If not for the Mount Li Sect Master's prompt arrival, the Prince of Xiang would have died on the spot.

Even so, the Prince of Xiang and the Mount Li Sect Master were

still surrounded.

Suddenly, a massive kite had appeared in the sky.

.....

.....

.....

.....

No one knew if Xiao Zhang was injured or where he was now.

Similarly, no one knew where Zhexiu was or what he was doing.

Some people were used to fighting alone.

The most epic and magnificent of battles since the start of the war, this clash of experts of the Divine Domain, came to an end.

The Demon race had suffered grievous casualties. Of the four high-ranking Demon Generals who had surrounded the Prince of Xiang and the Mount Li Sect Master, only two left alive. They also lost a member of the Council of Elders and one duke.

The Human race had not lost any experts, but both Mao Qiuyu and Huai Ren were heavily injured, and the Mount Li Sect Master even more so.

Gou Hanshi said, "Master has returned to Mount Li to recover, and the other seniors must rest for a while before stepping onto the front lines again."

It was very difficult to kill experts of the Divine Domain. They either needed to be surrounded or had to be fighting beings of higher realms, like the Tianhai Divine Empress.

But heavy injuries could still force them to halt their steps. Even Wang Po was no exception.

In Chen Changsheng's view, this was Black Robe's intention.

Even if he had to pay a devastating price, he wanted to momentarily deprive the human experts of the Divine Domain of

the ability to fight, hoping to at least make it so that they could not fully use their strength before the winter set in.

Without experts of the Divine Domain, the human armies would find their advance greatly hindered. Their progress was already much slower than originally planned, and how much more would it be delayed now?

And when the human armies finally reached the walls of Xuelao City, would the storm of snowflakes drifting down leave them any hope of victory?

Using the deaths of two Divine Domain experts and two high-ranking Demon Generals to buy ten-some days for the overarching situation... not just anyone had such resolve.

Every time they thought of this, Chen Changsheng and Gou Hanshi felt a hint of wariness for that young Demon Lord, even a little respect.

Black Robe was still the most frightening.

In retrospect, she had probably long since calculated all the details around the battle between the Demon Commander and Wang Po.

She had calculated which of the human experts would appear, and even that the Prince of Xiang would leave the Western Army Camp.

They could only say that her understanding of the human mind was truly terrifying.

If the battle of Mount Nuorilang had concluded like this, Black Robe could have at least proclaimed victory in the second phase of the war.

But in reality, she had lost.

The human armies broke through the second line of demon defenses far earlier than expected.

Before the summer was even over, the three cavalrymen at the very front could already see the outline of Xuelao City in the distance.

Because while the battle of Mount Nuorilang was taking place, several unexpected changes took place on the battlefield.

The person who had made the greatest difference between victory and defeat was the Human Commander-in-Chief, Divine General He Ming.

Everyone had believed that Divine General He Ming's assignment to the commander-in-chief position was a political compromise, or some preposterous order issued by the Emperor and Pope on a sudden impulse.

And just like it was in the war several hundred years ago, ordinary soldiers, excluding the black-armored heavy cavalry, did not have much effect on the outcome of the war, unless one was Wang Zhice.

But Divine General He Ming had played an extremely important role in this war.

At that battle's most intense moment, the plains for several hundred li in front of the mountains had become the battlefield for the experts of the Divine Domain.

For Divine General He Ming to establish the Central Army Camp at the most forward position seemed like a most unwise decision, especially at a moment like this.

The terrifying ripples of power arising from the fights of these Divine Domain experts were also very harmful to ordinary soldiers.

Relying on the protection of the array to keep out the Qi from these experts, the soldiers continued to battle against the wolf cavalry, but the situation had become incredibly perilous. The howling winds overhead were like an invisible plow, occasionally

tearing open a tent or digging up rocks which would then smash into the heads of innumerable soldiers.

A massive hole was torn through the main tent, wind and sand rushing in through it. The tallow candles had been extinguished long ago, and only the Night Pearls were still providing light. Divine General He Ming viewed his maps in this dim light as he issued order after order with absolute composure, his messengers madly rushing off to deliver them.

With each charge, the wolf cavalry got closer and closer to the main tent.

In their last assault, those massive wolves had only been two li away.

Ye Xiaolian gazed at He Ming's face, a complex expression in her eyes.

She had already suggested retreat many times, but Divine General He Ming had never agreed.

To her even greater consternation, he had even ordered the Sacred Light crossbows tasked with suppressing the charges of the wolf cavalry to lessen their firing.

The sword array formed by three-hundred-some South Stream Temple disciples was right outside the camp at this moment.

Even if the wolf cavalry charged over, even if that Xuelao City duke battling with her martial grandaunt outside the camp came to attack, she was still confident that she could protect the Divine General.

But how many of South Stream Temple's disciples would have to die for it?

As her mind was occupied with these questions, Divine General He Ming suddenly asked one of his own.

Everyone in the tent felt that this question was quite nonsensical.

"Where is the Demi-human race's North-Pacifying Army?"

A staff officer stared blankly at him for a few moments before answering, "According to the report from two days ago, they just left Cong Province."

"Just left Cong Province..."

He Ming sighed, appearing to be greatly saddened by this fact. "They're too far away, so I guess we have to do this alone."

Ye Xiaolian was quite confused and thought, even if the Demi-human race's reinforcing army were already here, do you think that they would be able to show up right now and save you?

Those stories about tens of thousands of cavalry emerging in a surprise assault out of a canyon were just stories.

Unless they, like the demons, had an array set up hundreds of years ago to create a path, sneak attacks like that were very hard to produce in this world of Red Falcons and demon vultures.

"Once they finish fighting, it will be our turn."

Divine General He Ming raised his head, his gaze piercing through the tattered canopy of the tent and into the sky.

Massive figures loomed within the heavy black smoke, and the bright sword glows seemed to be coming from another world.

That world belonged to experts of the Divine Domain.

Ye Xiaolian still did not understand the meaning of He Ming's words.

She subconsciously turned her gaze to the gloomiest corner of the tent.

Chapter 1145 – The Straightforward You and Me, Him and Her on the Paper

After Wang Po and the Demon Commander's clash of blades, the first to move was not the Prince of Xiang leaping out of the sun, nor was it Black Robe hidden behind all her schemes. It was Divine General He Ming.

He rubbed his tired face and walked to the gate of the camp, looking into the distance.

The wolf cavalry had stopped their assault. Like several streams of black water, they retreated into the dark path at the base of Mount Nuorilang.

The Demon Commander left in defeat, the Prince of Xiang followed, and the Mount Li Sect Master chased after him.

Huai Ren was sitting on the ground, treating her injuries. Mao Qiuyu was blocking the Third and Eighth Demon Generals. Wang Po was still standing at his original position, not moving a muscle.

The duke from Xuelao City landed on the plains, sending dirt flying into the air. He could barely stand, and his body was covered all over in wounds. He seemed to be on the verge of death.

"You are the human commander-in-chief?"

The duke looked at He Ming, a crazed expression appearing in his eyes. "Then your luck today is truly awful."

Even though he was about to die, even though Divine General He Ming was a Star Condensation expert, the threshold of the Divine Domain was truly very high. He truly did have the ability to kill He Ming.

The disciples of South Stream Temple surrounded the Central Army Camp like scattered white flowers.

They had not expected this expert of the Divine Domain to drop

from the sky, so they fell into a panic.

Ye Xiaolian was unperturbed, crisply calling, "Draw in!"

Divine General He Ming shouted, "Disperse!"

His voice was calm but firm.

Ye Xiaolian was very confused, even a little angry, but she recalled the temple master's orders and gritted her teeth. "All disciples, disperse!"

The white flowers drifted away, the surrounding tents collapsing in their wake.

Several hundred crossbowmen pointed their Sacred Light crossbows at the blood-covered duke.

The several hundred crossbows fired their Sacred Light arrows as one, forming a beam of light several feet thick that pierced through his body.

More than half of the duke's demon body vanished.

He lowered his head to examine his body, a hint of confusion in his eyes.

A dense clattering of footsteps broke the silence as the soldiers returned from the battlefield.

Before the soldiers could digest the shock and astonishment brought by the sight before them, they heard an order that was even more stunning.

Divine General He Ming declared, "We move out in sixty seconds."

A deputy general asked in shock, "Commander, where are we going?"

He Ming replied, "Xuelao City, of course."

He spoke these words as if there was no other answer.

Ye Xiaolian was shocked. This sight made her recall the young

master of the Tang clan on the Divine Avenue many years ago, and also that Senior Su Li that the temple master occasionally mentioned.

The specific arrangements were left to the staff officers and generals. Divine General He Ming returned to the main tent. He went to that gloomiest corner and softly said, "I must trouble the Holy Maiden."

Xu Yourong opened her eyes and asked, "How confident are you of success?"

She had not closed her eyes for quite a few days and was thoroughly fatigued.

She had originally planned to have a good rest today, but she ended up being dragged to the storage tent to chat with the Mount Li Sect Master. Once the Mount Li Sect Master finally left, she hid in the main tent, leaning against a box in the hopes of getting some rest. But the battle ended before she had much time to rest, and yet again, another person came to bother her.

She had not slept well, and her mood was not very pleasant, so her tone was naturally quite rude.

Divine General He Ming pondered this question and replied, "Thirty percent."

Xu Yourong contemplated this answer. "That's enough."

Divine General He Ming sighed, "Speaking with the Holy Maiden is truly straightforward."

Xu Yourong agreed, "This statement is correct. If it were Chen Changsheng, it truly would be troublesome."

She took an object made of bronze out of her sleeve.

It was the magical artifact that Shang Xingzhou had forged from the Clear Sky Mirror.

She was not intending to communicate with the capital, as the

other magical artifact was not in Chen Changsheng's hand, but Xue He's.

She told Xue He two things.

One: the Prince of Xiang was heavily injured and would not be able to return to the nine camps of the Western Army in the short term.

Two: Commander-in-Chief He Ming was ordering the entire Western Army to move out. In three days, they needed to enter the heartland of the Bunun Highlands and conquer Suluo City.

Xue He probably well understood the meaning of these two pieces of information.

And he had the guarantee of both Divine General He Ming and Xu Yourong.

Just as expected, Xue He went to the Right Camp on the same night and seized the Prince of Xiang's martial authority, upon which he ordered all nine camps of the Western Army to begin moving north.

The Central Army and the Eastern Army began to move out at the same time.

The fastest was North Third Camp of the Eastern Army's vanguard.

They marched throughout the night, bypassing Starstrewn Gorge, breaking through the Wutai River, and seizing the most important military pass on the southern border of the Bunun Highlands.

Using this as the breakthrough point, the human armies advanced with unimaginable speed, slicing the steely second defense line of the demons into three.

The most important factor was time. The seventeen days lost in the first phase of the campaign were completely seized back in this

process.

Black Robe's strategy could be considered to have completely failed.

.....

.....

Chen Changsheng put down the document in his hand and fell into a daze.

He felt like the words on the paper were too shallow.

The North Third Camp of the Eastern Army had marched overnight, bypassing Starstrewn Gorge and breaking through the Wutai River.

Just what sort of heroic epic of courage was contained in this short statement?

"The most important reason is that the North Third Camp suffered no losses in the demon attack."

Gou Hanshi recalled the first three names on the list of meritorious soldiers and smiled.

...Not because they had accomplished a great feat and gained honor for Mount Li, but because they were still alive and well.

But the crucial question was why those several thousand vultures flying out of the cliff had suddenly dropped to the plains and burned themselves to death.

This was a question that none of the officers on the front line could solve. In his private letter, Liang Banhu had also expressed his doubts.

Seeing Chen Changsheng's expression, Gou Hanshi vaguely understood what the truth was, but since Chen Changsheng was not mentioning it, it was not convenient for him to bring it up.

The story between the Pope and his Protector was not exactly the

talk of the town, but everyone that should have known did know.

After all, no one had seen that black-clothed girl standing by Chen Changsheng ever since the autumn of that year.

Chen Changsheng felt rather mixed when he thought about how she had left the warm isles of the Southern Sea and gone to the snowy plains once traversed by her father.

Then, he noticed that Gou Hanshi was smirking at him.

He felt rather embarrassed, but he thought of one matter that let him change the topic.

"What was that demon freak in the cliff shouting before they died?"

"Didn't Su Li leave?"

"Hm?"

Gou Hanshi smiled and explained, "I'm saying that this was what that demons was shouting. They were probably a demon of the Ghost-Driving Tribe, experts in controlling monsters. They're even more frightening than the shamans of the south. I heard that Martial Granduncle pursued them for many years and rendered them extinct. I didn't expect that one of them was still alive."

Why had Su Li hunted down the members of the Ghost-Driving Tribe?

There were no records in the Mount Li Sword Sect, Gou Hanshi didn't know, and Chen Changsheng couldn't guess.

They glanced at each other and thought of a possibility.

Perhaps, several hundred years ago, Su Li had seen the important role this tribe had played in the war?

Perhaps that really was the case.

Because before he left this world, Su Li had always been fighting with the demons.

It wasn't a battle, but a war.

And where was that fellow who had fought the demons ever since he was born?

Chen Changsheng really wanted to know where Zhexiu was.

Gou Hanshi was also very concerned, because Zhexiu was currently the son-in-law of Mount Li.

The front line had methods for recording military merit.

All they knew right now was that Zhexiu had killed ten-some demon soldiers since the start of the war.

This was an achievement to be incredibly proud of for an ordinary soldier, but it was rather strange for Zhexiu.

This was not the extent of his abilities.

Just where was he? What was he doing?

"It looks like I'll have to leave early."

Chen Changsheng said to Gou Hanshi.

In the spring, Gou Hanshi had told him that only when they could see Xuelao City would he be allowed to leave the capital.

Although those three cavalymen could now see Xuelao City, the main human army was still very far, so why did he want to leave now?

It was because though the human armies had obtained victory in this battle, in other aspects, the demons had barely managed to achieve their objectives.

The vast majority of the Human race's experts of the Divine Domain, Wang Po included, were severely injured, and they wouldn't be able to fight in the short term.

At this moment, problems in the morale of the soldiers could easily crop up, as the experts of the Divine Domain symbolized their confidence.

Chen Changsheng's appearance on the front lines now would assist greatly in stabilizing morale.

And if he appeared together with Xu Yourong, the effect would be even greater.

Chen Changsheng said, "As long as His Majesty is in the Imperial Palace, the capital will remain in order, and the hearts of the people will remain calm."

This time, Gou Hanshi did not object.

Because the situation now was completely different from the one in the spring.

It was truly summer in the capital.

The wind blew through the city. The filtering of the Luo River and the willows growing on the banks somewhat cooled it, but it heated up once more immediately upon meeting the red walls of the palace.

Mo Yu's cheeks were slightly red, and there was a little sweat on her brow. Her left hand was fanning a handkerchief and her collar had not been buttoned up fully, revealing a portion of her pure white skin.

Chen Changsheng sat across from her, staring at his cup, feeling like a flower was about to bloom from within.

Chapter 1146 – Idly Listening to Falling Flowers While Sending a Sword

Chen Changsheng had already said his farewells to his senior brother, but before he left, he naturally had to pay Mo Yu a visit as well.

Mo Yu had been a renowned beauty of the capital, and now she was even more gorgeous and moving.

He knew that she was not deliberately tempting him. It was just too hot here. Not even the cooling array in the hall seemed to be of any use.

"This place is too small."

He looked around and commented.

This place was a specially partitioned room behind the great hall. Compared to the other buildings of the Imperial Palace, it truly was extremely small, and it wasn't well-ventilated either.

"Before the Empress began to rule from behind the curtain, she learned governance from Emperor Xian for twenty-some years. This is the room that she listened from."

Mo Yu mocked, "When His Majesty just entered the palace, the venerable Daoist would sit here when court was in session. For me to sit here now, am I in some way unqualified?"

Chen Changsheng bitterly smiled. "Then I truly have nothing to say."

Mo Yu arched her brows. "Perhaps all of you think that I'm very ambitious."

For a time, Chen Changsheng truly had thought that she was very ambitious. It was not during the period when the Divine Empress was alive, but ten years ago.

She had always kept in touch with him, and when the emperor issued a decree requesting her to return to the capital, the letter she had sent to Chen Changsheng seemed rather hesitant. It was only afterward that Chen Changsheng realized that she had already made up her mind.

But when she insisted on marrying the Prince of Louyang, Chen Changsheng felt his view of her wasn't right.

If she really did have ambition, she should have married a figure with more authority, perhaps even marrying the emperor and becoming a new empress.

"That depends on what you mean by 'ambition'," Chen Changsheng said.

Mo Yu replied, "If ambition means authority, then I admit that I truly do have strong desires in this aspect, but all I want is to guarantee that I have the authority to involve myself in the affairs of the court."

These words were a little confusing, and Chen Changsheng needed a little time to sort them out. He curiously asked, "Why do you like handling government affairs so much?"

"Because I'm a female official taught by the Empress."

Mo Yu looked at him and continued, "Yourong and I were taught by the Empress. I like and have the ability to handle government affairs, while she's more skilled in killing in all directions."

Chen Changsheng thought of many memories from the past few years, and he could only express his silent agreement to this statement.

Mo Yu added, "Of course, she's even more like the Empress than me, perhaps because she's even more capable of killing people."

Ten-some years ago, in a nearby palace hall, the Tianhai Divine Empress had told her and Xu Yourong that killing people was the correct path.

Mo Yu knew that she couldn't do this. Perhaps it was because she had seen far too many of her family slaughtered when she was young.

That year, when she took up the sword and gave Zhou Tong death by a thousand cuts, she seemed to have used up all the killing intent in her body.

Chen Changsheng did not want to continue on this topic. Instead, he asked, "You've been married for so many years. Is he still that afraid of you?"

He was asking about the Prince of Louyang.

Mo Yu's slender brows perked upward. "That's respect, not fear. Do you think everyone is like you?"

Chen Changsheng hadn't expected to stir trouble, and felt a little awkward.

Mo Yu let him go and said, "He spends every day cooking at home. He just learned a seventeenth method for steeping radish and is having quite the fun time."

Seeing how happy she was, Chen Changsheng was also very happy, but he also... felt somewhat more complicated emotions.

He glanced at her hair and then took a sip of his tea as he asked, "Have you been sleeping well?"

Mo Yu's brows flew upward as she said, "Very well. Do you know? The bodies of fat men are all cold. It's very comfortable when you hug them."

.....

.....

On his journey to the front lines, Chen Changsheng would think of what happened that day in the Imperial Palace and laugh at himself.

This happened so often that An Hua became rather nervous. Fu

Xinzhi and Chen Fugui, now teachers at the Orthodox Academy, also became very uneasy.

Chen Changsheng had not brought too many priests of the Li Palace with him. Instead, he had brought students from the Ivy Academies.

He was traveling under the reason of inspection, but the students of the Ivy Academies were traveling to the front lines for the purpose of learning.

Not long after entering Tianliang County but before arriving at Xunyang City, Chen Changsheng and An Hua left the party early.

The records from the various Daoist churches were constantly being delivered to him and he had seen with his own eyes the true circumstances of the people, had seen the injured soldiers. Then he saw the plains.

Before entering the actual battlefield, he once more recalled Mo Yu's last words to him in the Imperial Palace.

"It's been two months since the people of the capital last had any meat, and only three barges of cotton have arrived from Luling this year. If you lose on the front lines, there will be many refugees this winter, and countless people will freeze to death on the road. This is a war between countries and is fought with a strength that could topple a country. It must be won, as a loss will mean the death of the country."

Yes, this was a war between countries. Both sides were certain to pour in all their strength, paying every price to gain the final victory.

But there were some things that Chen Changsheng still could not understand. He and Gou Hanshi had discussed them many times, but they had still not been able to provide a convincing conclusion.

In both the first phase and the second phase, the strategies employed by the demons had been too intense. Even in a war

between countries, they were still rather excessive.

Logically speaking, no one would choose a strategy of mutual destruction at the very start of the war. Even if the demons were the weaker side, was there a need for such a lack of confidence? And it was impossible for this strategy to weaken the humans' resolve, so what meaning was there in it other than making the demons lose even faster?

.....

.....

It was very difficult for people on the inside to clearly see the entire situation, even if these people were the Demon Lord or Demon Commander.

Those on the outside, by way of their perspective, actually found it easier to see a few problems. For example, Shang Xingzhou had long since noticed that point that both Chen Changsheng and Gou Hanshi had felt was a little off.

A convoy journeyed from Mount Han to Mount Li. Mid-journey, it stopped for a night at Luoyang.

On the morning of the next day, Shang Xingzhou left Luoyang. No one knew of this matter, and the only person he brought with him was a young Daoist boy so beautiful that he seemed to be sculpted from ice or jade.

Xining Village's old temple had become a crucial site protected by the Imperial Court ten-some years ago, but what soldier could obstruct him?

He brought the young boy into the old temple, quietly pondering the long-empty room. After ordering the young Daoist boy to continue memorizing the Canon of Flowing West, he went to the stream outside the temple.

The waters of the stream were just as clear as they used to be, and the fallen flowers drifted along with the flow. Whenever they

passed by him, they seemed to grow livelier.

A monk appeared on the stream bank.

Just like he was ten-some years ago, his face was handsome and his age hard to determine. He wore a black monk's robe, its surface covered in tears and dust.

Shang Xingzhou said to him, "Your Highness, I wish to know a few things."

This monk was the Prince of Chu's son. In terms of generation, he was Yuren's uncle. If he was a member of the court, he would naturally be a prince.

And if not for the coup of the Hundred Herb Garden, perhaps he would now be the emperor.

Of course, Shang Xingzhou would never admit this.

The monk replied, "Please speak."

Shang Xingzhou asked, "Just what does the Sacred Light Continent want to do?"

The monk said nothing.

Shang Xingzhou indifferently said, "You are still a person of our side."

All the compassion in the monk's eyes transformed into desolation as he said, "Just a traveler who has no home to return to."

Shang Xingzhou suddenly noted, "Now that I think about it, Tianhai's injuring your soul and making it impossible for you to return was not a bad thing."

In these words, he was clearly expressing his suspicions that the monk was working with the Sacred Light Continent on some scheme.

The monk declared, "Designs on the throne have already come to

nothing."

Shang Xingzhou said, "One must consider your descendants. After all, they still carry the blood of the Chen clan."

The monk was quiet for a very long time. Finally, he asked, "This is your promise?"

"If I die, my students will bring all of you back."

Shang Xingzhou seemed to think of something and lapsed back into silence. He added, "If they refuse, I will have this student bring you back."

The monk looked at the young Daoist boy sitting under the tree. A satisfied expression appeared on his face as he said, "What do you want me to do?"

Shang Xingzhou requested, "I want your help in sending over a piece of information and one object."

The monk said, "The Sacred Light Continent is too far away. This will require a very long time."

Shang Xingzhou replied, "It's just a meaningless move on the chessboard."

The monk asked, "What information?"

Shang Xingzhou said, "Tell Su Li that something has happened."

The monk defended, "I truly don't know if anything will happen on the Sacred Light Continent."

Shang Xingzhou returned, "I also don't know what will happen there, but I think that he probably knows that something is currently happening here."

The monk was quiet for a while, then he asked, "The object?"

Shang Xingzhou handed over a sword.

This sword had been wrapped up neatly with cloth, and a ring forged from melted bronze had been placed in the middle.

When the monk took the sword, he was careful to grip the bronze ring and not any other part of the sword.

"A good sword."

The monk's gaze fell on the bronze ring and he sighed, "Such a treasure, but you've actually melted it down to send a sword through space. Truly extravagant."

The Heaven Shrouding Sword was naturally a good sword.

The bronze was a shard of the Clear Sky Mirror.

Chapter 1147 – Tang Thirty-Six with an Unrelenting Fever

The war had entered the third phase, and also the cruelest phase. As the distance between the two sides shrank, the frequency of battles shot upward, as did the number of casualties. Strategy and tactics were becoming less and less useful in this stage as will and supplies took the forefront. It was just a matter of waiting to see who gave out first.

Around a thousand li from Xuelao City was a group of mountains on the plains. Many hot springs bubbled out from these mountains.

It was very hot in the capital, but the weather here was actually a little cool. The steam rising from the springs pervaded the mountains, making the whole sight rather pleasant to look at.

Chen Changsheng sat in a hot spring, his gaze piercing through the mist, curtains, and the nearby banners of the Orthodoxy cavalry, falling on the path leading out of the valley.

Many years ago, when he had been intending to leave on this path, he decided at the last moment to turn around, whereupon he was greeted by an unconscious Su Li.

Yes, this was the hot spring from back then, though this place had been covered in snow back then. The endless green that now filled his eyes felt rather unfamiliar.

"Your Holiness, the time has come."

An Hua crouched by the spring and spoke. Her voice was soft and gentle as if afraid to startle him.

Chen Changsheng woke from his daze and stood up. Using the enormous towel she had brought over to cover his body, he began to carefully dry himself.

An Hua looked at his complexion and was somewhat relieved to see that the hot springs really had proved useful. She helped him out of the hot spring and to a nearby pavilion to rest.

Other than a pavilion, there were a few other buildings in the mountains. They had all been built a few days ago.

To receive such luxurious treatment in the middle of war left Chen Changsheng quite uncomfortable. He felt like this would make many ordinary soldiers furious.

To his surprise, none of the soldiers who saw this sight from the distant plains were dissatisfied. On the contrary, they seemed to think this was proper, and even feel very proud.

Chen Changsheng had thought about this for a very long time, but he still didn't understand why this was the case.

He sat in the pavilion and looked into the distance.

On the distant plains, many soldiers were advancing in the direction of Xuelao City.

At such a distance, he felt like he could still hear the neighs of Dragonhorses... Yes, it seemed like they really were from Sloping Cliff Horse Farm.

The soldiers knew that the Pope was amongst these mountains, though he didn't know if they could see this pavilion.

The news had already spread throughout the front lines, so unless there was some emergency, even the cavalry would dismount when passing by the mountain. Many soldiers would even disobey orders and run out of their ranks to kowtow to the mountain. Only after doing this would they return satisfied, not even caring if they would be punished by their superiors.

Chen Changsheng had already seen such things happen many times.

He didn't understand why these ordinary soldiers viewed him

with such pride, but since they wanted to see him, he was willing to let himself be seen.

Thus, over the last few days, he would often sit beneath this pavilion, even though An Hua, Linghai Zhiwang and the others objected.

A chilly wind blew into the mountains from the plains. Before it could be warmed by the mists from the hot springs, it caressed Chen Changsheng's face.

As his body warmed by the hot springs gradually cooled, the redness on his face retreated. It became pale, thin, haggard.

Another wind stirred as the White Crane landed.

It then flew up to the pavilion, squinting its eyes as it perched on the roof with one leg, letting all the soldiers on the plains see it more clearly.

Xu Yourong walked to the edge of the cliff and looked down at the springs steaming like so many hotpots. "If you continue to do this, you'll die before they break through the walls of the city."

She did not turn to Chen Changsheng, and her face had no emotion. She seemed to be speaking casually, without actual concern.

Perhaps it was because she had repeated these words many times already but still received no answer from Chen Changsheng.

Upon reaching the front lines, Chen Changsheng had refined two bottles of Cinnabar Pills ahead of time.

Everyone knew what this meant.

He himself was keenly aware of what this meant, but after seeing so many young faces twisted in the fear of death, after hearing all that weeping, he couldn't possibly not do this.

And he had also been injured.

This was the front line, and though he was the Pope and under

heavy guard, he was also a priority target for the Demon race.

The most dangerous incident had been when the Second Demon General had led a party of demon experts on an aerial assault utilizing vultures. It was also in that incident that he had sustained significant injuries.

He had come to the plains in the midsummer, when Xuelao City had been visible on the horizon. It was now early autumn, and it was said that the vanguard could already clearly make out the walls of Xuelao City, that the North Third Camp could even make out the faces of the guards on the wall, but... still no one had truly reached Xuelao City.

The closer Xuelao City was, the more resolved the demons were to resist, the less they feared death. Many soldiers even felt like this mission was impossible.

It was clear that the application of just a little more pressure might break the Demon Lord within Xuelao City and the tens of thousands of tribal warriors standing guard outside it.

But at this moment, many people in the human armies had already broken.

On the same night, a few soldiers who had broken were forced to withdraw to the south, the vast majority of them heavily injured.

Ye Xiaolian, accompanied by several disciples, a teacher from the Thirteen Divisions of Radiant Green, and three clerics from the Li Palace, were with them, escorting a person back to the south.

Just who was this person that could make her leave the Central Army Camp with such an array of forces?

Although heavily injured and deprived of his authority, the Prince of Xiang was still persisting on the front lines, so why was this person so important?

No one understood what Ye Xiaolian was thinking, but to the Li Palace clerics and the teacher from the Thirteen Divisions of

Radiant Green, this person was naturally incalculably more important than the Prince of Xiang.

Because he was the Pope's friend.

.....

.....

Chen Changsheng was not an eloquent speaker, and he thought of problems in an excessively simple fashion. To use the words of a certain person, he easily made others speechless.

But from Xining Village to the capital, he had still made a few friends.

Though when talking about his friends, many people would immediately think of Tang Thirty-Six.

Tang Thirty-Six's cheeks were sunken, but they were also a brilliant red, like a steamed lobster. His eyes were also so bright that it made one feel flustered.

Chen Changsheng sat by the stretcher and said, "Back when you bought that restaurant, I knew that it was improper."

Tang Thirty-Six listlessly said, "How was it improper?"

Chen Changsheng replied, "Eating too many blue lobsters will incur retribution, and look at your appearance now."

It was clear that though Tang Thirty-Six had been severely ill these last few days, he had still often looked at himself in a mirror, so he quickly understood Chen Changsheng's joke.

In understanding a joke, he naturally had to laugh. Tang Thirty-Six laughed and coughed, seeming to be in great pain.

Ye Xiaolian placed an ice-cooled towel on his forehead and turned around to glare at Chen Changsheng.

After glaring, she realized what she had done. Panicking, she repeatedly asked for forgiveness.

Chen Changsheng naturally wouldn't think too much of her actions. He merely said, "Yourong is next door. Go and see her."

Ye Xiaolian softly affirmed, but she mentally grew even nervous. How am I supposed to explain this to the Holy Maiden?

After Ye Xiaolian left, Tang Thirty-Six looked into Chen Changsheng's eyes and asked, "Just what sort of illness do I have?"

Chen Changsheng replied, "You've taxed your mind too severely and a cold has permeated your internal organs. It's very grave."

Tang Thirty-Six's eyes burned with a ghostly fire. "I feel like there's something off about this illness."

Chapter 1148 – Infiltrating Xuelao City

Chen Changsheng smiled and said, "I know that you're unwilling to accept this, but there truly is no problem."

Tang Thirty-Six was quiet for a while, then he said, "You're the best doctor. If you can't cure it, where can I go to get it treated?"

Chen Changsheng returned, "I'm not skilled in treating colds, and the Cinnabar Pill also isn't very appropriate."

Tang Thirty-Six sneered, "I wouldn't eat that thing even if you gave it to me, because I don't eat people."

Chen Changsheng proposed, "So you have to go back first to treat your illness."

Tang Thirty-Six was quiet again. Then he said, "Our gatekeeper is much older now. Without me to help, I'm worried that his body won't be able to keep up."

Chen Changsheng patted him on the shoulder and said, "I'll discuss this with the others. You go back first. Principal Mao is recovering at Mount Han. You also go."

On the morning of the next day, Tang Thirty-Six left, and Ye Xiaolian with him. Xu Yourong had agreed to this, though she had not told Chen Changsheng, as she knew that Chen Changsheng was very slow with regards to relationships between men and women; perhaps one could call him completely ignorant. But she also knew that Chen Changsheng was well-versed in many other aspects, like the medical arts.

She glanced at him, but she ultimately chose to say nothing.

Chen Changsheng gazed at the distant army banners fluttering in the wind, his expression calm and determined.

He stood under the pavilion in the mountains, watching the world.

And the world was watching him.

His calmness endowed countless soldiers on the front line with confidence.

In truth, only a few people knew that his heart was not so calm.

Many matters had left him on the verge of crumbling, like those deaths, or Tang Thirty-Six's unrelenting fever.

Fortunately, however, he had someone to rely on.

Xu Yourong had been standing by his side the entire time, not as a wife, not as a subordinate, but as an equal.

When she held her hands behind her, Linghai Zhiwang and the others even felt like she was taller than Chen Changsheng.

"This morning, we received news that Senior Brother Liang has died. Two elders of the Sword Hall died in the same battle. Guan Bai went to provide support and also died."

Xu Yourong's expression was very calm. It was like the news of these deaths had nothing to do with her.

Chen Changsheng closed his eyes. Only after a while did he finally open them again.

"Every person will die. As long as we can eventually resolve this problem, those deaths will not be wasted, will have meaning. They will also be a mercy."

With this said, she walked down the mountain.

Linghai Zhiwang and those priests followed her with their eyes brimming with both respect and pity.

The soldiers and believers on the front lines needed to gain strength from Chen Changsheng's calm.

Chen Changsheng needed to gain strength from her.

But who could she rely on?

Even An Hua began to sympathize with her, and began to

worship her.

.....

.....

Xuelao City was very large, and when one added to it the tensome citadels and the tents set up by the warriors from the various tribes, it occupied a massive area. By the time the southern part of the city was welcoming a chilly and somber wind, the plains to the north of the city were already beginning to accumulate snow. And yet nowhere could one find a trace of the human armies.

Zhexiu was sure that he was the first human—if he counted as a human—to reach these plains. It wasn't because he was more courageous than the soldiers, or more skilled at taking risks. It was because reaching these plains to the north of Xuelao City had utterly no meaning to the war the human armies were engaged in at this time.

But it was extremely meaningful to his war.

Seven days ago, he had encountered a small troop of demon soldiers in the ruins of an ancient colosseum one hundred and twenty li to the west of Xuelao City.

He had been battling with demons since he was a child, and his understanding of demons far surpassed that of an ordinary person. A few details made him notice that the leader of this small troop was special. The leader was very young and extremely tall. From the style of the clan crest on his accessories, he probably belonged to a clan rather close to the Imperial clan, and he was probably highly ranked in this clan.

Why would a young noble appear on this dangerous battlefield? This was out of line with Zhexiu's understanding of upper-class demon society. A thousand years ago, the demon aristocracy would have still maintained a reverence for martial process, regarding heroism and military achievements as the source of glory. But they

had degenerated ages ago.

Zhexiu continued to track this small troop of demons, ultimately reaching one conclusion.

This young noble had left the city under the protection of his clan's experts to gain some military merit, but he didn't want to encounter any danger. Thus, this small troop had only paused at the ruins of the ancient colosseum for less than an hour before veering north. Everyone knew that the human armies could not possibly circle around to the north of Xuelao City in the short term.

As for how that young noble would gain any military merit upon returning to Xuelao City... Zhexiu was confident that this was an extremely simple matter. Perhaps the heads of several dozen human warriors had already been prepared, just waiting for him to put them on that large carriage once he got back to the city.

Xuelao City was already in an extremely precarious situation. For the nobles in the city to still be thinking about fabricating themselves some military merit, Zhexiu didn't know if they were going senile or were excessively greedy. But someone who dared to play tricks at this hour was unquestionably a powerful person in the Demon race, and that young noble probably had a very special status.

Upon reaching this conclusion, Zhexiu was overtaken by a fierce impulse, and this impulse laid out an extremely risky plan.

He decided to infiltrate Xuelao City.

.....

.....

A pack of monsters from somewhere began to attack the small troop of demons. With the experts of his clan protecting him, the young noble was unconcerned about his safety. He was even in the mood to watch as the necks of those violent monsters were cut

open. His pale white cheeks blushed in excitement as if they had been daubed with actual blood.

The monsters were all killed, but the demon troop inevitably paid some price. The three bravest warriors had suffered significant wounds. Most troublesome of all was that the snow and mud on the ground had been crushed into a slurry that was hard to traverse. The troop decided to camp in the forest for the night, using a blood pigeon to communicate this news to Xuelao City.

Unbeknownst to the demon warriors and young noble of this small troop, this night would be the most terrifying night of their lives.

The scent of blood spread through the forest and some sort of strange beast seemed to be moving through the mud. The clouds in the sky gradually parted, but the stark light of the Moon offered them no courage. They could only hear the sounds of their breathing, could only feel their weapons get colder and colder. Gradually, the sounds of breathing ceased and they could no longer feel the chill of their weapons, as their own bodies were beginning to gradually turn ice-cold.

It turned out that this had also been the very last night of their lives.

The soldiers of this small troop died in silence. There were no sounds of warning, no screams, no struggle, and certainly no fighting. The entire process played out like some bizarre mime show, but there was no audience. Only the sparse stars to the south and the white Moon bore witness.

Early on the next morning, a group of cavalry from Xuelao City rode into the forest according to an earlier agreement.

The ten-some cavalymen completely clad in armor were escorting three large carriages, the compartments containing the corpses of human soldiers they had gone through great pains to collect from the south. When they thought about the coming

reward from their young master, these cavalymen found it hard to maintain their stern and cold expressions, as the sweetest of smiles crept onto their lips.

But when they entered the forest, they did not see that tall figure, only an absolute tragedy.

The sounds of weeping filled the air as the demon cavalry waved their weapons at the sky. They vented their unease and fear, lamented their sorrows, and swore to take revenge for 'Gruel', though it was hard to say if Gruel was the young noble's name or a prefix for his entire clan. After this, they placed the bodies of their comrades on a carriage and began to make their way back to Xuelao City. They did not dare pause for too long. Of course, their nominal reason was to warn the city as quickly as possible that the human armies had circled around to the north...

On their return journey, the demon cavalry broke into a fierce quarrel. It was probably about how they would deal with the inquiries from the clan elders and how much gold they would need to pay off their guilt. They became even more dejected, so much so that when passing through the needle forest, they forgot that they had originally planned to hunt some deer.

Xuelao City got closer and closer, and more and more shabby buildings began to appear. The majority of the buildings were barely held together with wood and cloth, and seemed extremely fragile. Holes could be found all over them and there was certainly nothing beautiful about them. If not for the fact that lower-class demons could endure bitter cold, they wouldn't have been able to survive.

Upon hearing the cavalry coming, the lower-class demons who were in the midst of cutting wood and working hurriedly kneeled on the sides of the road, not even daring to raise their heads.

Normally, these cavalry might have been in the mood to let these lower-class demons enjoy the lash of the whip, but they didn't have

the slightest inclination today. They wanted nothing more than to immediately return to Xuelao City. Of course, if they could, they wanted nothing more than to never return to Xuelao City.

Chapter 1149 – First Snow

Whether one wanted it or not, Xuelao City would always be there, waiting for travelers returning home or foreigners with ill intentions.

The human armies were still in the south, so though the north city gate was under slightly stricter guard, normal entry and exit were still allowed.

The large carriage being pulled along the gray stones attracted many eyes.

The demons saw the large corpse in the compartment and their pale faces and deep blue eyes became shocked as they began to shout. There were many kinds of Demon language, and the different classes within Xuelao City would often use different languages, but at this moment, the majority of the cries were shouting the same word: Gruel.

No noticed that there was a very long wound on that large corpse, and a small hole had been torn open in its chest which just so happened to be concealed by a fur robe.

If someone examined the body up close, they might discover an extremely bizarre and frightening sight.

There was an eye in that little hole. The eye was very calm and devoid of emotion, but very clearly alive.

["Giant Gruel's grandson?"](#)

Zhexiu mentally checked over the top-secret information he had seen from the Ministry of the Army and understood who the young noble he had killed was, so he stopped ruminating over the question.

Through the small hole in the young noble's body, he took stock of the streets and buildings of Xuelao City.

On the surface, humans were rather similar to high-class demons, but they were two completely different species. The two species had battled for tens of thousands of years, establishing grudges that could never be resolved. Whether physically or mentally, the two sides were completely cut off from each other. Only in Grand Scholar Tungus's era was there a short period of very limited interaction.

For countless years, only an extremely small number of demons had ever appeared in the capital, and the majority met with the most miserable of ends. As for humans... after Wang Zhice signed the armistice with the Demon Lord, no human was allowed to step one foot into Xuelao City. Zhexiu could be considered the first human in centuries to enter Xuelao City.

To humans, Xuelao City was strange and evil, the nest of demons and ghosts, the abyss of evil. Just what exactly was it?

Zhexiu only knew that the walls of the city were extremely high, several times higher than the walls of Luoyang. Even though it had been a very long time since he had been brought in through the city gates, he could still clearly see the moss and snow on the walls. The streets here were straight and wide. The buildings were also very large, and the vast majority of them were built with stone. Though they looked rather crude, they also had an indescribable beauty. Moreover, at set intervals, he would see steep spires. He didn't know their purpose, but they gave off a majestic and divine aura.

After some time, the sky gradually brightened, and Zhexiu could tell that it was noon. Suddenly, however, the sunlight was obstructed, leaving behind a shadow. Zhexiu saw a black monolith. He couldn't tell what this black monolith was made of, and it seemed like even his vision was being absorbed by its surface.

After apparently going through an inspection, the beast dragging the carriage proceeded forward, and more of the black monoliths began to appear before Zhexiu's eyes. He could see one spaced

every ten or so zhang, standing tall and upright on a green hill. The limitations on his field of vision meant that he could not see everything, but what he could see told him that it was assuredly a grandiose sight.

Black monoliths were planted all over this green hill, making it look like a massive graveyard or an array used for sacrificial offerings.

Zhexiu felt the young noble's corpse being lifted up and then slowly and carefully placed in a pit slightly lower than the ground.

He suddenly felt that something was not right.

In his original plan, he had intended to wait for the young noble to be buried, wait underground for several days, and then leave to find Nanke.

Based on his understanding of the demons, the young noble's clan graveyard should have been near the Demon Palace.

And when he saw those massive black monoliths, he really did think that this was the graveyard belonging to the young noble's clan.

The bodies of the Gruel clan had always been particularly massive, which is why there was such a thing as 'Giant Gruel'. He felt that the gravestones of this clan should have been larger than usual.

But someone with the young noble's status should not have been buried so hastily, not even in the middle of a war.

If this place was not the graveyard of the Gruel clan, what place was it? What were all these mysterious black monoliths doing here?

Some time had passed but no coffin lid had been placed, making Zhexiu even more suspicious.

He stretched his fingers out of the young noble's wound and

pushed the clothes to the side so he could look outside the pit.

His range of vision was still limited, and the first thing he saw was still a black monolith.

Somewhat closer up, he could finally see that this was a square monolith, but its head tapered into a point which was aimed at the sky.

Zhexiu's gaze followed the tip of the monolith up into the sky.

In the past, on the snowy plains, he would often use this angle to view the sky. When he was hunting down his foe to wear them down and needed to hide himself, he would often bury himself in the snow and gaze at the overcast sky with eyes wide open. One look would last for a very long time, so he knew that looking for too long would result in a sort of misperception. Height would seem to invert and the sky would become an abyss. He would be floating in a void, overcome with anxiety. It was the same feeling now.

This feeling of emptiness grew more and more intense, ultimately becoming a sort of omen.

On the other side of the sky, the bottom of the abyss, an eye seemed to be watching him as well.

Zhexiu felt like he had lost control of his body. Cold sweat slowly seeped out from his skin, taking all his courage with it.

At the summit of the green hill, where Zhexiu couldn't see, Black Robe looked up to the sky, surrounded by several thousand black monoliths.

Suddenly, Black Robe tore her gaze from the sky and swept it over the monoliths.

At this moment, Zhexiu's heart suddenly beat out of step with his normal pulse.

At this crucial moment, his old illness, the Tide Rush of Blood,

had let him wake from this nightmare that contained nothing real and realize that someone was observing him.

He closed his eyes, and his breathing gradually came to a stop. He seemed to become an actual corpse.

Suddenly, snow began to fall from deep in the overcast skies. It fell on the green hill and pits, gradually burying all the demon corpses.

.....

.....

The war between the humans and demons had entered the most unbearable stalemate phase. The plains to the south of Xuelao City were fraught with battle, with not one square of clean earth to be found within a radius of one thousand li. Deaths were piling up at every moment, and both sides were exhausted and numb, waiting to see who would crumble first.

The Sacred Light arrows of the human armies were nearly exhausted and the supplies from the rear had begun to lag behind the advance starting from ten-some days ago. As for the replenishments of other weapons and objects like crystals, they had not been resupplied for quite a few more days than that. As for the Western Army, which was currently sweeping the demon bases on the periphery, there had not been any good news. The demons were faring no better. The weapons used to defend the city were mostly in an irreparable state, and a few parties of the Human race's bravest cavalry were occasionally able to penetrate as close as three li from the city walls.

One early morning, a chorus of elated shouts suddenly rose from the plains of the north, following closely by singing. Gradually, the shouts and singing began to spread southward, and when they reached Xuelao City, they transformed into thunderous cheers. Finally, they came to the tens of thousands of tribal warriors encamped outside the city, who joined them with crazed roars.

At the start, the human armies had observed the demons with wariness and confusion, unaware of what had happened.

As the cheers of the demon soldiers grew louder and louder, the human soldiers grew more and more nervous.

Divine General He Ming looked at the overcast sky, finally understanding what was happening.

He stretched out his hand to catch a drifting snowflake.

It was snowing.

'Giant Gruel', 庞大固埃, is the Chinese transliteration for 'Pantagruel', a character from a series of satirical and obscene French novels written in the 16th century, 'The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel'. Gargantua and Pantagruel, both giants, are father and son.

Chapter 1150 – One Carriage, One Painting

This year's first snowfall was earlier than the ones from years past.

According to the records from the Ministry of the Army, this was the earliest official record of first snowfall over Xuelao City in the last three hundred years.

The snowfall did not mean that the weather would immediately chill, but it did mean that it was starting to shift.

But even more frightening were the mental implications it had on both exhausted sides. It was sufficient to change the entire state of the war.

Accumulated snow might not melt for half a year in the winterbound Xuelao City. To the human soldiers, fighting in such a climate was no different than sending themselves to their deaths.

Everyone understood what this snowfall meant for the war.

In order to crush the renewed confidence of the demons, to smash this inauspicious sign, and perhaps to even stop the human soldiers from thinking about this problem, Divine General He Ming immediately decided to begin another assault on the city. The Western Army was also ordered to hasten their cleansing of the battlefield.

At this most crucial of moments, the humans displayed an extraordinary courage and resolve, especially its experts.

In order to recompense for his error at Mount Nuorilang, the Prince of Xiang bravely entered the battle once more and was once more heavily injured.

Xiao Zhang also appeared. His kite had been able to fly past Mount Yanzhi, but it could not fly past those walls before once more disappearing.

Liang Wangsun finally appeared on the battlefield, his golden lotus blooming in front of Xuelao City.

In the end, he was heavily injured and fell into a coma, so he was carried back to Xunyang City.

Liang Banhu had died in battle, as had Liang Hongzhuang, and Liang Wangsun had been heavily wounded.

The Liang clan of the previous dynasty had put aside their old grudges with the Chen clan in this expedition against the demons. Their performance could even be called heroic.

If Liang Xiaoxiao, who had colluded with the demons back then, had lived to see these sights, what would he think?

The solemn and stirring actions of the human experts and the deployment of the troops by Divine General He Ming succeeded in slightly alleviating the oppressive air brought by the first snow.

But as the snow continued to fall, and the siege continued without success, the morale of the human army continued to drop.

Just when Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong were intending to move out, something happened.

To be more precise, a carriage arrived outside Xuelao City.

This carriage was not drawn by a horse, ox, mule, or any other beast, yet it was able to travel forward on its own. It was a rather mystical sight.

The wheels crunched along the snow and mud. It looked like it was very slow, but it managed to very quickly travel from the south to the camp.

Even more mystical was that the long path from the south was probably crawling with leftover soldiers and ferocious bandits, yet this carriage had arrived unscathed despite its complete lack of escort.

Countless gazes fell on the carriage.

The carriage curtain was raised and a young Daoist boy poked his head out. Upon seeing the tens of thousands on the plains, he covered his mouth in surprise and hurriedly retreated back inside.

In this very short time, many people were able to clearly see that this young Daoist boy was very beautiful. He seemed to be carved from jade, his eyes were like black dots of paint, and his face was brimming with intelligence.

.....

.....

"Do you think I look more stupid?"

Chen Changsheng looked to Xu Yourong and hesitated before adding, "And... not as handsome?"

Xu Yourong knew what he was thinking and said, "When you were little, you were prettier than he is."

Chen Changsheng replied, "We only exchanged letters when we were little, but we never actually met."

Xu Yourong explained, "Lord Crane said this."

The cry of a crane came out of the sky.

The White Crane was offering its testimony.

.....

.....

The small carriage stopped at a small mountain outside the battlefield.

The carriage curtain was raised again, this time held up with wooden hooks.

The young Daoist boy jumped to the ground and helped the other person in the carriage step out.

Countless gazes had followed this small carriage from the southern plains all the way to this small mountain.

Even the tribal warriors outside Xuelao City stopped their cursing.

Once they saw that boy who seemed to be carved from jade, many people had guessed who was inside the carriage.

Just because it had secluded itself for ten years now did not mean that the common people did not know what was going on in the Monastery of Eternal Spring.

Many people knew that there was a young Daoist boy within that monastery.

As for whether that master and disciple were angry at each other again, who knew?

.....

.....

Shang Xingzhou had still come.

It was right when the morale of humanity was at its lowest, when the war had reached its most critical and dangerous point.

After several hundred years, he had come once more to Xuelao City.

Many people, including himself, had already guessed that this would be his last visit to Xuelao City.

Other than the injured Prince of Xiang, the important individuals in the army all came to this small mountain to pay their respects.

In the plains outside Xuelao City, dust was rising constantly between the various camps and this small mountain.

Though he had secluded himself in Luoyang for ten years, Shang Xingzhou's prestige was undiminished and had even risen.

.....

.....

As he saw plume after plume of dust rising from the plains,

Linghai Zhiwang's face grew even more fraught with concern. He looked to Chen Changsheng, wanting to advise him with a few words, but he knew that it was not the right time.

Archbishop An Lin had returned from the dangerous front lines with Guan Bai's body.

The tens of thousands of demon warriors encamped outside Xuelao City had come from the various tribes and did not have the complete trust of the Imperial clan, but they were exceptionally lethal on the battlefield.

Chen Changsheng sat by Guan Bai's body for a very long time.

Back in the All-School Martial Exhibition, Guan Bai had been standing by the road and glanced at him. That had been their first meeting.

Afterward, Wuqiong Bi entered the capital and tortured a stray dog to death. And after that, Guan Bai lost an arm.

For this matter, no matter what Bie Yanghong said, no matter how miserable Wuqiong Bi had ended up, Chen Changsheng had never forgiven her.

He felt that someone like Guan Bai was worthy of even greater respect, deserved an even better end.

He hadn't expected him to still end up like this, to only end up with this.

"What about Liang Banhu?"

Chen Changsheng asked Archbishop An Lin.

He remembered it very clearly.

As the first to reach Xuelao City, the North Third Camp of the Eastern Army had always been a thorn in the side of the demon armies. They had almost been surrounded multiple times.

Late one night, several days ago, ten-some of the Demon race's great tribes cooperated in a counterattack. Their objective was the

North Third Camp.

The battle that night had been exceptionally desperate, and only after Guan Bai led one thousand Orthodoxy cavalry in an overnight march to reinforce them was the danger finally resolved.

But Guan Bai died in battle, and Liang Banhu, one of the three cavalymen to reach Xuelao City first... had also died in battle.

"Liang Banhu chose self-combustion." Archbishop An Lin recalled the sight of that desperate battlefield. An expression of sorrow on her face, she looked at Chen Changsheng for some time before finally saying, "I don't know if he was trying to repent for the crimes of his brother, but I heard that he was particularly courageous on the battlefield."

Chen Changsheng fell quiet. At these sorts of moments, he didn't know what to say.

Archbishop An Lin added, "There's something wrong with Guan Feibai's mood. We must think of a way to make him retreat."

Chen Changsheng replied, "Discuss the matter with Yourong."

An Lin left to carry out this order.

Linghai Zhiwang asked, "Shouldn't we go over there to take a look?"

He was naturally referring to the small mountain where Shang Xingzhou resided.

Chen Changsheng had still not gone there, so neither had Linghai Zhiwang and the other priests of the Li Palace.

In truth, many of the priests were constantly looking over at that mountain.

Chen Changsheng was the Pope and of most esteemed status. But he was still the student, so it was somewhat unreasonable for him to not take the initiative to pay a visit.

"There's no need."

Chen Changsheng pulled up the white cloth to cover Guan Bai's face.

He and Linghai Zhiwang walked out of the tent. As he gazed at that distant mountain, he wanted to say something, but he ultimately chose not to.

Doing nothing, Chen Changsheng returned to his own tent.

Shang Xingzhou remained in his own carriage.

Separated by a hundred-some li, teacher and student maintained their silence.

Occasionally, Chen Changsheng would glance in that direction.

On the other hand, Shang Xingzhou's eyes remained closed as he allowed the sun shining over the demon realm to cast its heatless rays upon his face. It was like he wanted the elderly wrinkles on his face to be somewhat smoothed out.

Everyone, including the demons in Xuelao City, wanted to know what Shang Xingzhou would do next.

Presumably, he would not just sit in his small carriage and watch the battle.

Early on the morning of the next day, they finally saw what Shang Xingzhou wanted to do.

He had hung up a painting in the sky.

Chapter 1151 – Fire Burning Sangharama Temple

A kite floated in the sky.

In some remote cranny, Wang Po wiped the muddy water from his face and squinted at the small mountain. He had naturally recognized that kite as belonging to Xiao Zhang.

Wasn't that kite dashed to pieces on the walls of Xuelao City several days ago?

In the past, a person had been tied to that kite, but today, it was a painting.

This painting was massive, ten-some zhang in both length and width. It swayed in the wind like a wave of wheat, but the scenes on the canvas remained strikingly clear and unaffected.

Upon seeing this painting, Divine General Fei Dian, who had just been saved by a Cinnabar Pill, focused his dazed eyes into sharp points.

Three elders in a supply convoy on the southern plains also squinted their eyes, their minds overcome with nostalgia.

Atop the walls of Xuelao City, in the shadow of a tower, Black Robe hid her hands in her sleeve as a jeering smile floated on her lips.

They could all see what was depicted in this painting.

It was Sangharama Temple, so gorgeous and ornate that it did not seem part of the mortal world.

The lineage of Buddhism had been cut off for countless years.

But the incense fires of Sangharama Temple lasted for far longer.

They had lasted until a thousand years ago, when they were finally annihilated by the fires of war.

The demons invaded and Luoyang was besieged for three months. Of every ten people in the city, three would survive. The people endured grievous casualties, and in total, six million people were killed.

The cultural landmark that was Sangharama Temple had endured untold damages.

All its beauty was lost to a single torch.

The scene depicted in this painting was precisely the fires burning Sangharama Temple.

There were now very few people who had ever seen Sangharama Temple, but many would have seen drawings of it in books, and knew of this story.

As for the siege of Luoyang, no human could forget that shame and misery.

That massive painting in the sky was almost lifelike, and seemed practically real.

Upon seeing those flames, the soldiers felt like they could hear the buildings creak in pain as they began to collapse.

There were also many faces on this painting: pained, twisted, confused, numb. In the end, these people had all died, died in this great fire.

Upon seeing this painting, the soldiers on the front lines once more thought of a simple principle.

This was history.

This was the source of anger.

This was why they had appeared at the base of Xuelao City.

.....

.....

As news of this painting and the information it bore was spread

around the camps, a theory began to emerge.

It was said that, back then, the Painting Sage Daoist Wu would often spend his time painting the walls of Sangharama Temple. Was he the artist behind this painting?

The entire continent knew by now that Daoist Wu was not dead, that he was currently traveling the world with a certain person.

If Daoist Wu was here, did that mean... that person had also come?

When they thought about how a legendary figure like Wang Zhice might appear on the front lines at any time, the morale of the human armies received a major boost.

In contrast, the morale of the demon soldiers suddenly dipped, dropping even more than the human morale had risen.

To the human armies, the effects of Shang Xingzhou arriving or Wang Zhice arriving were about the same. To the demons, they were completely different. They probably did not know who the current human emperor was, or who Chen Changsheng was, or that Shang Xingzhou was the teacher of the human emperor and Chen Changsheng, but they undoubtedly knew who Wang Zhice was.

.....

.....

Dusk.

The setting sun painted red the western face of Xuelao City.

Half of the city seemed to be ablaze.

Suddenly, countless wild cheers broke out from atop the walls and the plains around the city.

These cheers sounded like the words 'Gu Lun Mu'.

Many demon soldiers could understand a few simple demon

words, and they could never forget the meaning of this particular phrase.

When the demon soldiers crazily charged, wanting to exchange life for life, or when they were surrounded on a mountain and ultimately chose to commit suicide, they would always shout this phrase.

The meaning of this phrase was 'Divine Emperor'.

The Demon Lord had finally appeared.

Chen Changsheng took the Thousand Li Mirror from Linghai Zhiwang's hand and used it to examine the walls of Xuelao City.

The sky today was particularly clear, and the setting sun did not affect his gaze. He could just barely make out what was happening on the city wall.

Even though it was somewhat fuzzy, Chen Changsheng was still able to recognize that face he had not seen for so many years.

The Demon Lord appeared much more composed than he had been at White Emperor City, and his visage appeared even more dignified.

When he saw the beard that the Demon Lord had deliberately grown, Chen Changsheng recalled Tang Thirty-Six. And then he saw the Demon Lord's horns.

Logically speaking, the Demon Lord, as a member of the Imperial clan, should not have had horns, but now he had two, and adorned with decorations as they were, they seemed particularly exaggerated.

It was clear that he was using them to win the affection of the lower-class demons.

.....

.....

Shang Xingzhou had arrived.

The Demon Lord had appeared.

This meant that the final battle was about to commence.

To the demons, nothing could be better than bitterly defending Xuelao City until the winter set in. But they had no means of resolving the problem of rations and fodder. This was exactly the same problem that had once confronted Luoyang. Even if they began to slaughter the common folk and do their best to decrease the non-military population, they had no means of addressing the provisions for the tens of thousands of tribal warriors encamped on the plains.

Moreover, the human armies would not leave for them any of the bodies of their comrades.

Time, place, and unity of the people were the three factors that decided the outcome of a war. The demons had the favorable location while the humans were united, but as for the time...

The recent snowfall seemed to say that the Heavenly Dao favored the demons, but the time of the final battle was for the humans to decide.

So who would end up being the final victor of this war?

.....

.....

It was yet another early morning.

The plains outside Xuelao City were quiet. It seemed like they had not yet awakened.

A horn suddenly blared.

The entire world woke up.

Every living being in the world was waiting for this moment.

Perhaps they had not even actually fallen asleep last night.

The wolf cavalry, the Demon race's primary fighting force,

engaged in a fierce combat with the Eastern Army.

The black soil of the plains flew into the air and dropped back down like rain. The sounds of weapons clashing, mixed with groans and screams, could be heard all over the plains, occasionally mixed with the sounds of arrays triggering.

The Eastern Army managed with great difficulty to resist the tide of demons. Finally, at noon, they managed to buy a little time to rest.

The main camp sent an urgent order to the front lines, demanding that the troops at the very front retreat as quickly as possible and switch with the cavalry from the rear.

Feathered arrows flew through the air, suppressing the opposing side's spearmen and serving as a shield.

Everything had been proceeding smoothly and methodically, but problems had been encountered at a certain place.

The North Third Camp, which had been on the very front line since the start of the war, had refused to retreat.

Guan Feibai had refused to listen to the orders.

He was not the commander of the North Third Camp, but he was a disciple of the Mount Li Sword Sect and the strongest of the troops.

At the start, he and his two junior brothers had assaulted the cliff, and then they had been the first to reach Xuelao City.

The entirety of the North Third Camp now listened to Guan Feibai's orders.

Guan Feibai's refusal to retreat had a very simple reason behind it.

His junior brother Liang Banhu had died, and Guan Bai had also died to save them.

His eyes were already red from bloodlust.

At this most tense of moments, a crane cried, and Xu Yourong arrived on the scene.

Guan Feibai gripped his sword and narrowed his eyes at her. His voice was so hoarse that he seemed like a beast that had not drunk water for many days.

"Junior Sister, don't try to persuade me."

His narrowed eyes were completely red.

Xu Yourong knew that though he still seemed to be rational, his words in order, he was actually already crazy and impossible to persuade.

"I remember that Senior Brother Qiushan should have prepared a silk bag for each of you."

Xu Yourong stared into his eyes and said, "You should open it up and see what's inside."

Chapter 1152 – The Unaging Mountain in the Tide

Guan Feibai's body went rigid.

Before they left Mount Li, their eldest brother had prepared a silk bag for each of them, telling them to open it up at the most crucial times.

A few days ago, when the North Third Camp was surrounded and the reinforcements from the Orthodoxy cavalry had not yet arrived, he had noticed Liang Banhu opening that letter and reading it for a very long time by the fire.

On the very next day, Liang Banhu had died in battle.

Was it his turn today?

He took out the silk bag and opened it. Inside were a letter and a pill.

In the letter, Qiushan Jun explained that this pill was the one that Xiao Zhang had used to help him break through but had ultimately caused his descent into madness.

Eating this pill had a chance of causing a great increase in strength, perhaps even leading to a breakthrough, but there was an even greater chance of it severing all of one's meridians. In the less serious cases, one would end up like Xiao Zhang and need to cultivate for ten-some years before recovering, and in the more serious cases, one would die on the spot.

Bai Cai did not see what was written on the letter, but he could guess at what it said from the change in Guan Feibai's expression. He began to plead for him to desist.

Guan Feibai impassively gripped the pill, paying no attention to his implorations.

Bai Cai turned to Xu Yourong and wept, "Why did you have to

remind him of this?"

"Why do you need to blame Junior Sister? In the end, it's a choice that each of us makes."

Guan Feibai's expression was very calm. After saying these words, he swallowed the pill.

And then, he fell asleep.

"It's a knockout drug. Senior Brother had me ask Chen Changsheng to make them."

Xu Yourong explained to Bai Cai, "Liang Banhu's silk bag also had one, though I don't know why he didn't eat it. Perhaps he didn't trust the contents of the letter?"

Bai Cai watched as his senior brother was carried away like a drunkard and subconsciously scratched his head. "I still haven't opened my letter, so I don't know if it says the same thing."

Xu Yourong caressed his head and softly said, "Then just follow me."

Only now did Bai Cai realize that she had been guiding the conversation this entire time.

.....

.....

The demons' primary force was truly focused on assaulting the Eastern Army. Other than around ten thousand wolf cavalry, they had also brought several times that number in tribal warriors.

The most important proof was that this army was being led by the Demon Commander.

From ten-some li away, it was still possible to clearly make out the massive outline of the Mountain-toppling Fiend.

The old Mountain-toppling Fiend had died on Nuorilang, and it was hard to say where the Demon Commander had managed to

find another one.

Wang Po's sole arm hugged his blade as he sat in a moist and muddy swamp. He leaned against the husk of a long-dead tree with his eyes closed, ignoring the sounds of fighting and death from beyond the thin mists.

His wounds were far from recovered. If he wanted to block the Demon Commander, he needed to cherish every bit of his strength.

Why had the demons given up on the Central Army Main Camp and attacked the Eastern Army? The reason was so simple that everyone could see it.

Because anyone could see that small mountain on the edge of the battlefield.

There was a carriage on that mountain.

There was a young Daoist boy in that carriage.

The young Daoist boy was currently flying a kite.

A massive painting was tied under the kite.

The painting depicted the burning of Sangharama Temple.

.....

.....

The wolf cavalry surged forward like a tide, but when they were still several li from the mountain, they were blocked by the black-armored cavalry.

This battle was carried out with abnormal forthrightness and crudity. The intentions of each side were obvious, so there were few tactics to speak of.

The entire plains seemed to be able to hear the quaking from the east, the furious sounds of fighting.

"I don't know if that side will be able to last. I only know that I'm about to reach my breaking point."

It was extremely rare for Linghai Zhiwang to speak to Chen Changsheng with this tone.

He truly was under enormous pressure. Right now, as soon as he walked out of this tent, he would immediately attract countless gazes.

Those gazes were ones of inquiry, unease, disdain, or encouragement. They were incomparably complex and exceptionally vicious.

The primary force of the demons had assaulted the Eastern Army and that small mountain might be drowned out by the black tide at any time.

At this time, everyone wanted to know the Pope's stance.

The vast majority of priests and soldiers hoped that he would immediately order the army to move out to aid them.

Yes, not even Divine General He Ming had the right to issue this order. Only Chen Changsheng himself could make it.

"If there's no news from that side, we don't move."

Chen Changsheng explained.

Tomorrow was the appointed time to make Cinnabar Pills, and he was considering whether he should cancel this session so that he could preserve his energy for the coming final battle.

Because the Cinnabar Pill had not been able to save the people he had wanted to save.

People matured the fastest on the battlefield.

Guan Bai's hand was ice-cold.

This would not deprive his heart of warmth, but it did make it much tougher than normal.

Linghai Zhiwang hesitated for a while before saying, "Is there a possibility... that it's not convenient for that side to send news?"

For a master to ultimately ask his student for aid... especially for this master and disciple who were famous for the strange relationship they had, was truly very difficult.

If it really was like this and Chen Changsheng did not take the initiative to provide reinforcements, what would they do if something really did happen?

Shang Xingzhou was a Saint and had an unfathomable cultivation, but he was still old, his body frail.

According to the news from Luoyang, he had grown much older in the last few years.

Nothing could be allowed to happen to Shang Xingzhou, because he was the spiritual leader of the Human race.

No matter how much one disliked him, one had to accept this fact.

When he thought of that scene by the spring, of the tightly bound black hair and... the white hair that was now impossible to conceal, Chen Changsheng fell quiet for a while. In the end, all he did was wave his hand.

.....

.....

As the battle continued, the pressure from the various sides felt more and more real. The gazes became Red Falcons with messages, and some Divine Generals had even attempted to charge into the camp and request a meeting with Chen Changsheng.

Chen Changsheng had met these Divine Generals, but he had not accepted their requests.

Xu Yourong said, "The situation there truly is rather grim. The North Third Camp won't move, but the Fourth Camp might be moving soon."

Chen Changsheng replied, "I know."

Xu Yourong noted, "The pressure is increasing."

Chen Changsheng gazed at the distant plains and the dust rising from the mountains. After a few moments of silence, he said, "When I was little and growing up in Xining, when pressure came, it was always Senior who blocked it for me. When I went to the capital, it was Martial Uncle and Archbishop Mei Lisha. After that, it was you. But in truth, my ability to endure pressure is quite good."

He had directly confronted the shadow of death since the age of ten. There was no one better than him at enduring pressure.

He continued, "The battle started too early. That's problematic."

Yes, no matter how grim the state of supplies in Xuelao City was, they should have been able to last for some time, at least until the weather had gotten a little colder.

Xu Yourong also thought so and asked, "What do you think?"

"Master not asking me to help him means that he doesn't need my help. I don't know what he's planning, and I've always been a little weak in this aspect, so I can only cooperate with him as I usually do..."

Chen Changsheng looked at her and said, "It's just like in White Emperor City. You and Master finished planning everything and I just followed along."

Xu Yourong pondered this and realized that he was right.

In terms of character, she, Shang Xingzhou, and the Divine Empress were one type of person while Chen Changsheng was another type.

The continuation of humanity required the former, but the latter was the goal. Perhaps this was why she loved him?

"I love you."

Xu Yourong spoke with great solemnity, staring into his eyes.

Such a sudden confession truly left one defenseless.

Critically, there were still many people around, still people in the tent.

They had made no attempts to conceal their conversation.

Linghai Zhiwang was carefully cleaning the magical artifact in his hand as if he had heard nothing at all.

Divine General He Ming's hand that was lifting the tent flap froze mid-action, just like his smile.

An Hua gave a starry-eyed look toward Xu Yourong, finding the Holy Maiden to truly be outstanding.

.....

.....

Such sights were rare occurrences, small flowers fortunate enough to bloom in the midst of blood and fire. The primary theme of the battlefield was still battle.

Battles were everywhere—chaotic battles, bloody battles. For hundreds of li, the plains to the south of Xuelao City were filled with constant battle.

The earth here was brimming with rotting substances. It was an intoxicating black, so rich and abundant that the blood falling on it did not seem very conspicuous at all.

But with the plains being painted white by the snow falling over the last few days, and then so much red and green blood being added in, the ensuing drawing was even more heart-shaking.

Even the most radical of Xuelao City's artists could never have imagined this combination of colors, this collision of brushstrokes.

Feigned attacks, impeding, suppressing, dividing and conquering, shoving like the tide—once all the little maneuvers were used up, the situation was still just as clear as it was at the start.

The most tense and desperate battle was still taking place between the wolf cavalry led by the Demon Commander and the Eastern Army.

The wolf cavalry and black-armored cavalry clashed, ripping each other apart, swallowing each other.

It was like the place where the river and ocean met.

Different shades of blood collided, stirring massive waves, forming a giant vortex that was enough to swallow the sky.

The center of this vortex was precisely that small and unremarkable mountain.

Chapter 1153 – The Most Blessed Young Daoist Boy

The string of the kite had been tied to the shaft of the carriage. The painting floated in the air.

The young Daoist boy did not dare to watch the bitter fighting taking place around him. He used his hands to cover his face, the occasional peek scaring him so badly that his entire body trembled.

The carriage curtain had already been raised. Shang Xingzhou sat on the edge, his feet on the ground.

If Chen Changsheng were here, he would discover that Shang Xingzhou was even older than he had been at Luoyang, his hair having gone completely white.

He held a fan in his hand, and as he slowly waved it, his white hair drifted in the slight breeze.

His eyes were closed. As he listened to the sounds of fighting and blood splashing in the plains, he felt neither revulsion nor intoxication.

He was very calm. When one had reached their final destination, everything they had done and all the people they had met were just a part of the journey.

He keenly understood why the demons were putting all their strength into killing him.

He naturally would not leave.

What he wanted was to attract the main force of the demons. At the same time, he was also offering his opponents a sort of proof.

This was a thick fog required by both sides.

He would also not send any news to the Central Army Camp. The quieter the Central Army Camp was, the more intent the demons

would be on killing him. In these circumstances, if he were to be killed by the demons, Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong would come under heavy criticism from the soldiers and priests, and the human armies on the front lines might even splinter.

He knew that Chen Changsheng would be able to endure this enormous pressure, though he didn't much care. If he couldn't even endure this trifling pressure, what right would he have to be his student?

The fighting persisted from dawn until the autumn sun reached its zenith. The vanguard of the wolf cavalry finally managed to break through the defensive lines of the black-armored cavalry and reach the small mountain.

But before those giant wolves with their panting breaths and oozing saliva were even able to take one step onto the mountain, they were all shot to death by several thousand Sacred Light crossbow bolts.

In a situation where Sacred Light crossbow bolts were fast running out, the simultaneous firing of so many was an extremely rare sight on the battlefield.

One could only say that Peng Shihai and every other commander of the Eastern Army placed Shang Xingzhou's safety as their utmost priority.

The bodies of the dead and wounded were littered all around the small mountain.

The human cavalry once more surrounded the small mountain and engaged in a simple purge. When they met any wounded demons, they would naturally finish the job, and if they encountered any of their wounded comrades, they would carry them to the mountain and place them on the slope. If there was a break in the battle, the Li Palace clerics and teachers and students of the Thirteen Divisions of Radiant Green would come to treat them. They could only hope that the wounded could survive until

then.

The soldiers placed their wounded comrades on the slope and said a few comforting words before leaving.

Of course, before leaving, they did not forget to kowtow to the small carriage.

The young Daoist boy spread apart his fingers, revealing his sparkling black eyes. He looked at Shang Xingzhou.

Without opening his eyes, Shang Xingzhou said, "Don't bother me if you can't treat any of them."

The young Daoist boy happily grunted. He extracted two grass ropes from his sleeve and used them to tightly tie his wide sleeves to his wrists. This done, he ran to the mountain slope.

Only wounded soldiers were present on the mountain slope, so there was naturally no one to stop him.

But he didn't have a medicine box, so it was hard to say how he would treat them.

Soon after, the young Daoist boy untied the needles from his finger and began to staunch the bleeding of the wounded soldiers, his small face a picture of absolute focus.

As he moved from soldier to soldier, his face grew redder and redder from the heat, his forehead caked in sweat.

One wounded soldier was wearing a felt hat rarely seen on the battlefield. It concealed most of his face, but the part that was showing was tinged with green.

The young boy scratched his head upon seeing this soldier. "Poisoned? I certainly don't know how to treat it."

After saying this, he gave up on this soldier for the time being and went to stop the bleeding of the other soldiers.

This done, he returned to the carriage and gave a sweet smile to Shang Xingzhou. He crisply declared, "Ancestor, I've returned!"

The boy's face instantly went from all smiles to one on the verge of crying. He was clearly extremely nervous as he silently mouthed several words.

At some point, Shang Xingzhou had opened his eyes.

He calmly nodded his head.

The young Daoist immediately leapt into the carriage and hid himself behind Shang Xingzhou.

Shang Xingzhou turned to observe the wounded soldiers on the slope, his gaze following the boy's finger to ultimately rest on one particular soldier.

It was the soldier wearing the felt hat with a slightly green complexion.

Shang Xingzhou calmly gazed at this soldier.

A shallow wrinkle appeared at the corner of his eye. In the gentle caress of the wind, the wrinkle burrowed deeper and deeper into his skin.

Suddenly, an extremely bright ray of light appeared in his eyes.

Several dozen zhang away, a cut silently appeared on the wounded soldier's throat.

A spatial fissure was the sharpest existence in the world and could lead straight to the Netherworld.

Beads of blood appeared on the green skin and were slowly cut apart.

The soldier suddenly opened his eyes, his body sinking into the ground like a figure made of sugar dissolving in water.

The spatial fissure followed the soldier into the ground.

The wounded soldier's body transformed into smoke that seeped out of the earth and into the surrounding slope.

Shang Xingzhou suddenly closed his eyes.

The massive painting hanging from the kite depicted the burning of Sangharama Temple.

A young Daoist boy abruptly appeared in the blazing ruins.

He was a handsome Daoist, a carbon copy of Shang Xingzhou when he was young.

He looked around the plains, his gaze razor-sharp. It seemed capable of seeing through all illusions.

In the painting, the young Daoist's clean eyes suddenly shone with ten-some bright rays of light.

In the carriage, Shang Xingzhou's face gained ten-some deep wrinkles.

Sliceslicesliceslice!

The sharp sounds of slicing could be heard across the slope.

The spatial fissure was gradually annihilated.

Black Robe appeared.

Her human uniform had already been sliced to shreds that had vanished in the wind.

The black robe that had protected her for a thousand years was also sporting several tears.

Red blood was flowing out from a few of these openings.

The legend was true. Black Robe really was a human.

.....

.....

"I didn't expect that you would actually succeed in a sneak attack against me."

Black Robe gazed at Shang Xingzhou in the carriage.

Her voice penetrated through the hood. It was somewhat low and somewhat evil, but it was now also somewhat moving.

Just like she had said, she had taken an enormous risk today by dressing up as a human cavalryman and approaching Shang Xingzhou so that she could ambush and kill him.

To her surprise, Shang Xingzhou had seen through her disguise, and she almost ended up being killed by his counter.

"Back then, your student tried to kill my student with this technique, and now you're using it again. Such a repetition truly makes me disappointed."

Shang Xingzhou's voice was flat and emotionless. It was cold and indifferent, making it seem like he was not speaking to the Demon Military Advisor, but an old acquaintance.

He was naturally referring to how ten-some years ago, the young Demon Lord had disguised himself as a heavily injured array master and allowed the Mount Song Army's Chen Chou and An Hua to bring him to the snowy mountains to find the master of the Cinnabar Pill.

Black Robe replied, "His Majesty wanted to kill the previous sovereign at the time. It had nothing to do with Chen Changsheng."

Shang Xingzhou said, "Regardless, it's still an old move. Otherwise, how could it fail to fool even this student of mine?"

The young Daoist boy behind him was earnestly listening, but he had no idea just how important these words were to him.

In these last two years, many people knew that a young Daoist boy had appeared in the Monastery of Eternal Spring, attentively serving Shang Xingzhou.

Yet Shang Xingzhou had never clearly stated just who this young Daoist was to him.

But today, he said these words to Black Robe.

Just what sort of benefits came from being Shang Xingzhou's

student?

One only needed to know that of the students he had taken before, one was Emperor and the other was Pope. That was enough.

Even Black Robe couldn't help but take a second look at this young boy.

Although her plan today was not exactly new, it actually had a very high chance of success. She hadn't expected a little child to see through it.

This was probably what was meant by 'most blessed'.

Chapter 1154 – The Fisherman by Xining Village's Stream Uses His Spear

"You want to lock down my soul and kill me with a single strike? An excellent method, but it's a pity that it didn't work, because you are already old."

Black Robe walked toward the small carriage. The cold winds blowing through the holes in her black clothes made them look like a war banner from the Netherworld.

Shang Xingzhou's eyes remained indifferent as he took in this sight, but the young Daoist boy behind him was scared out of his wits. His small face was snow-white and his entire body trembled.

None of the surrounding cavalry had noticed what was happening on the small mountain. It was obvious that Black Robe had employed some sort of method to prevent them from finding out.

The battle on the plains continued, and it was even more intense than before. The Mountain-toppling Fiend seemed to have gotten a little closer.

The Second Demon General suddenly led the tribal elders and experts in an assault on the Central Army Camp.

Sounds of fighting rose from all around the plains, all to conceal that killing intent in the small mountain.

Shang Xingzhou indifferently said, "I truly am very old, because I am not you, who actually used such repulsive methods on your body to live a few more years. For the once-supreme beauty of the world to become a person that's not a person, a ghost that's not a ghost, after you die, will you still have the face to see your older brother?"

"Shut your mouth!"

Black Robe's voice turned shrill, as sharp as iron needles, as it echoed across the small mountain.

Several small holes instantly appeared on the painting in the sky.

"None of you have the right to mention his name!"

Black Robe furiously screamed.

And then she immediately calmed down. The entire process had been extremely sudden and strange.

Her hood could not conceal the green tinging her face, and the addition of that faint smile made her seem even stranger.

"I will kill you, and then I will have Brother in the Netherworld kill you again, kill you countless times."

Shang Xingzhou's expression remained calm as he said, "You first have to be able to kill me."

After so saying, he abruptly began to cough so badly that his always-erect posture gradually began to bend like an old pine.

The young Daoist boy held his arm and massaged his back. His eyes were watery as he shouted in his childish voice, "Ancestor, Ancestor, are you okay?"

Shang Xingzhou straightened his body with some difficulty and then waved his hand.

"Look at your pitiful face full of wrinkles and your head of white hair. How could you possibly be my opponent?"

Black Robe looked at him and said, "Thus, go die."

The words 'go die' were often only heard by the marketplace well, and it was often only vicious women who said them, uttering the phrase like a curse.

Black Robe spoke them very calmly and elegantly. She was not cursing him, only describing something about to take place.

Her composure concealed an admiration that could never be

voiced, an appreciation for talent.

After all, in these last one thousand years of history, she and Shang Xingzhou were the two most outstanding schemers.

Alas, any scheme still relied on strength to ultimately realize, and victory and defeat still relied on life and death. This seemed to slightly deprive them of beauty.

Black Robe disappeared.

She reappeared in front of the carriage.

There was no link between these two scenes. They seemed to be two independent incidents.

The peak of the mountain was quiet and still.

Patches of grass sank into the ground, several clear footprints appearing in them.

The blur left behind by Black Robe's body against the background of green and yellow appeared like the tip of some giant brush. Dripping with black ink, it hungered to draw a painting or produce a volume of calligraphy.

This brush did not land on that giant painting in the air, but on the carriage.

Black Robe's thin and withered finger, suffused with a faint green light, stabbed at Shang Xingzhou's throat.

.....

.....

A hint of regret appeared in Shang Xingzhou's eyes.

As was said before, he and Black Robe were the two most remarkable schemers in the world.

In truth, he really did want to exchange blows with Black Robe.

Alas, he truly had gotten old.

As the only person in tens of thousands of years to have achieved great success in the cultivation of the Canon of Flowing West, he knew more than anyone else the power of time.

Every night of the last ten years, he had been able to sense his life passing, his soul melting into the void.

He was a member of the Orthodoxy's legitimate line, so he was not willing to be like Black Robe and use an evil method to prolong his life, and his strength was also inferior.

His attempt just now to lock down Black Robe's soul had failed, so he could only wait for Black Robe to come and kill him.

He felt profound regret at not being able to battle her when he was at his peak. It didn't need to be a simple and direct battle, but a battle of exceptional schemes and most unscrupulous methods.

Did he have any other regrets besides this, like his death?

He had driven his carriage to this mountain to lure the demons into coming to kill him.

Luring Black Robe was already the best result he could imagine.

There was a small stream outside Xining Village's old temple, and there were many fish in this stream. It was a favorite pastime of Yuren and Chen Changsheng to stand by this stream and watch the fish play, but his was fishing.

It didn't matter if they were koi or red snappers, if they were large or small, if they were steamed or braised. They were all delicious.

He was the world's finest fisherman, and since he had made himself the bait today, who was still capable of escaping?

.....

.....

The autumn sun was at its zenith, and it was precisely the brightest time of day.

Black Robe's mood was just as bright and charming as the sunlight.

The brighter the surroundings, the darker the carriage compartment seemed.

Her hand was still two feet away from Shang Xingzhou.

She saw the regret in Shang Xingzhou's eyes and the fear in the young Daoist boy's.

But then she saw a sudden point of white in the carriage.

What was this wan and pale white?

Was it the face of a ghost demanding her life or was it a white sheet of paper?

And then a chilling ray of light tore through the darkness and slashed at Black Robe.

It was so bright that it felt like someone in the carriage had lit a sun.

It was so cold that the grass on the mountain slope was instantly covered in a thin layer of frost.

What sort of light would have two completely different Qis?

In a swamp ten-some li away, Wang Po leaned against the husk of a tree, watching the nearby Mountain-toppling Fiend with incredible focus.

Suddenly, he sensed something and turn to look at the small mountain.

At almost the same time, the Mountain-toppling Fiend also turned to look in that direction.

The Demon Commander's cold gaze suddenly blazed with fervor and then almost immediately cooled as worry worked its way in.

The Second Demon General and the tribal experts attacking the Central Army Camp had also sensed the appearance of this

powerful Qi.

Chen Changsheng and a few Divine Generals also sensed it.

Xu Yourong sensed it the most clearly and accurately, because she was the one most familiar with it.

When she was living in the Imperial Palace as a child and got bored, she would often go to seek out that spear and play with it.

.....

.....

Black Robe howled and retreated with unimaginable speed.

Her eyebrows were covered in frost and everything she saw with her eyes seemed to be suffused with a rainbow glow.

This included that spear tearing through the darkness.

There was a soft squelch.

Black Robe landed on the grass several dozen zhang away.

A hole had appeared on the right side of her chest.

Blood poured out of it.

It was a terrifying wound.

Golden flecks of light drifted out of the bloody hole, making it also seem like a setting sun.

"How is this spear in your hands!"

Black Robe stared at the carriage at the peak of the mountain and yelled in anger, "Why are you here?"

The white sheet of paper flapped in the wind.

Xiao Zhang walked out of the carriage, a spear in his hand.

Chapter 1155 – The Elderly Youth

The spear looked ordinary and unremarkable, even more so than Xiao Zhang's own spear.

But a spear that could injure Black Robe could never be ordinary.

This was the number one weapon on the Tier of Legendary Weapons, Emperor Taizong's personal weapon, the Frost God Spear.

"Everything is futile. Your defeat is inevitable."

Leaving behind her cold and gloomy words, Black Robe transformed into a black fog that dispersed amongst the chaos of the battlefield.

Xiao Zhang wanted to pursue, but his body swayed and he almost fell to the ground.

It seemed like his attempt to attack Xuelao City on his kite was real, and the heavy injuries he had sustained were also real.

Though no one knew when Shang Xingzhou had brought him onto his carriage.

"A kite for ten years with this spear—do you think the exchange is worth it?"

"Of course it's worth it."

Xiao Zhang caressed the spear, an excited look on his face.

Every spear user dreamed of personally holding the Frost God Spear, and he was no exception.

Shang Xingzhou shook his head.

In his view, he had cast pearls before swine.

In truth, he had never felt like anyone of the current era was worthy of holding the weapon left behind by Emperor Taizong.

But it was necessary to defeat the demons, and Xiao Zhang was

the strongest spear user, so he had reluctantly allowed him to use it.

Xiao Zhang raised his head and looked in the direction that Black Robe had vanished, warily saying, "I feel like the matter is not this simple."

He had been hiding in the carriage for days, silently accumulating energy. Even his preparations and the might of the Frost God Spear were still not sufficient to kill Black Robe. This was related to the injuries he had sustained, and it was also because Black Robe was too strong. Yet it was possible that Black Robe had not been using her full strength.

"The demons truly want me to die, even if it's just a few weeks earlier, but this is not so important that they would leave the city and start the final battle early."

Shang Xingzhou was very calm as he spoke.

His gaze saw farther than Xiao Zhang's, or perhaps penetrated farther.

The demons had started the final battle early in order to cause chaos on the plains. The chaos was meant to conceal their true intentions, which now appeared to be assassinating him. But could the demons have made even more plans in advance? For instance, if their assassination failed, this chaos would also serve to distract the humans.

If this really was the case, what was the Demon race's true killing move?

Shang Xingzhou turned to the south.

.....

.....

For a war, the most important thing was naturally logistics.

And the most important things in logistics were rations and

fodder.

If weapons were destroyed, one could rely on the body to fight. If Sacred Light crossbow bolts ran out, one could just use regular arrows. In the most arduous of moments, courage and will would often play an extremely crucial role, but if there were no rations or fodder, how could one fight if the body was starved of strength? If the Dragonhorses could no longer move, how could the army move? And there would certainly be no charge.

The Great Zhou Dynasty placed extreme importance on logistics, and for this war in particular, they had been preparing the necessary resources for ten full years. If one took into account the seventeen strongholds and the granaries in the northern reaches of Tianliang County, one could even say that the preparations had stretched back to the era of the Tianhai Divine Empress and Emperor Xian. There were even some strategies that had been decided on in Emperor Taizong's era.

Gathering and preparing rations and fodder was an exceptionally difficult task, and it was even more dangerous and difficult to transport them. This task grew even more difficult as the war continued. With each successive victory, more and more of the supply line extended into demon territory, increasing the chances of disruption and even large-scale raids.

For the sake of safety and efficacy, the transportation network utilized by the human armies grew larger and larger, and more and more cultivators began to accompany the convoys. The most important convoys would even be escorted by an expert of the Divine Domain. Mao Qiuyu had traveled several times between the north and south.

The war had now entered its ending phase, and Mao Qiuyu had been heavily injured and returned to Mount Han to recover. Huai Ren, the Mount Li Sect Master, and the Prince of Xiang lacked any more strength to fight. Wang Po, on the other hand, was tasked with watching the Demon Commander, and even though he had

not fully recovered, he could not take one step away from Xuelao City, so he had no energy to devote to this matter. Fortunately, the demons were in an even worse situation, having already lost three experts of the Divine Domain since the start of the war. Moreover, important figures like the Demon Commander, Black Robe, and the Second Demon General could not leave Xuelao City, so the situation was still safer than it was before.

"The Ministry of Revenue is taking the lead on the matters of the Imperial Court, and it's mostly the Tang clan and the Mutuo clan that are providing the goods from the south, so I don't understand why the Qiushan clan is in such a rush."

The logistics official frowned as he looked at the carriage at the front of the convoy.

The Qiushan clan head and its legendary Guardian who was only half a step from the Divine Domain were in that carriage, putting a massive pressure on the entire convoy.

A subordinate officer said, "Everyone knows that the Qiushan clan head is obsessed with his son. That he's willing to put in so much effort almost certainly has to do with Qiushan Jun."

The logistics official recalled that rumor and teased, "So what he really wants is to get back some face for Mount Li."

He was referring to that story from the northern expedition of many years ago.

The Mount Li Sword Sect disciples in charge of transporting supplies ended up being late for some reason and were almost all executed by Jin Yulu, who was impervious to any pleas for mercy.

In the end, that generation's Mount Li Sword Sect Master used the manual of the Mount Li Sword Style to convince the White Emperor to appear, preserving the lives of Xiao Songgong and a few other disciples.

As for Xiao Songgong being punished after Mount Li's internal

strife, that was another matter.

To the Mount Li Sword Sect, this story was the sole stain on their reputation in the minds of the common people, as long as one did not count Su Li.

At the moment, the Mount Li Sword Sect was being managed by Qiushan Jun, and this rather taciturn son of the true Dragon naturally hoped to use this war to wipe away that stain. Perhaps it was for this very reason that the Qiushan clan was so proactive, acceding to every request of the Imperial Court and even volunteering to join the troops in the north.

"It's not solely about face."

The subordinate officer said, "I heard Lord Jin Yulu say that if this matter was done well, he would return the Mount Li Sword Style manual to Mount Li after the war concluded."

The logistics official froze, and then he said with a hint of envy, "That's just a little too simple."

He wouldn't believe it if anyone said this, but since Jin Yulu had said these words, he had to believe them.

Since the start of the war, the demi-human army had done nothing but march in circles in the plains of Cong Province, never once going to the battlefield. Both the people and court of the Great Zhou were furious and fuming with criticism, but no one had any complaints about Jin Yulu, much less any doubts.

This was in part due to the fame he had achieved in the campaigns from long ago, and it was also because he had played an extremely important role in this war as well.

Everything related to the logistics of the army was completely under Jin Yulu's purview, every detail, whether big or small, decided completely by his words.

The Emperor of the Great Zhou and the Pope had granted him this special authority and trust, but they had also placed a

frightening pressure on his shoulders.

To help him alleviate this pressure, he had several hundred officers and old officials from the Ministries of the Army and Revenue, accountants from the Tang clan, secretaries specializing in money and fodder from the Wu clan, two manservants he had brought with him from White Emperor City, and his appointed deputy, Tang Thirty-Six. All these were his subordinates.

By now, many of those old officials and accountants had been taken out of action by illness while Tang Thirty-Six's unrelenting fever had confined him to Mount Han.

Jin Yulu was so thin that he was nothing but bones, but he still persisted.

He had won the reverence of the entire army.

One part of reverence was fear.

The logistics official gazed at the distant mountain range looming out of the plains. His body trembled as he inwardly hoped that nothing would go wrong.

The supply wagons of this convoy could guarantee that the soldiers on the front lines would have enough rations and fodder for twenty days. It consisted of thirty thousand peasant laborers and several thousand large wagons. From head to tail, it extended for several dozen li and presented quite the breathtaking sight. It was also being escorted by three thousand cavalry and the experts of the Qiushan clan, so there was no need to worry about attacks from scattered demon soldiers, and there was certainly no danger from bandits. But the road was long and no one knew what one might encounter. If they were even late by one day, even if they were not given the death penalty, the truncheon of martial law was also not easy to endure.

At this moment, a general rode his horse to the carriage of the Qiushan clan head and whispered a few words into it. After a

while, the deep voice of the Qiushan clan head came from the carriage, soon followed by shout after shout from the surroundings. The stewards and guards of the Qiushan clan grew somber and the convoy began to advance even faster. The galloping of hooves sounded like a downpour as the cavalry swiftly rode past the supply wagons and into the distant plains. While scouting, they also worked to clear the road.

"It seems like we'll pass through Nuorilang before nightfall."

The logistics officer raised his horse whip and pointed at the distant mountain range, adding, "Then we'll be able to see Starstrewn Gorge tomorrow."

.....

.....

Looking from the plains, it appeared like a mountain range towering into the sky.

But from the sky, it looked like five mountain ranges forming a series of barriers across the plains.

Nuorilang was the highest peak of these mountain ranges, so both demons and humans were in the habit of using Nuorilang to refer to the entire mountain range.

No one could have expected that in a certain mountain of the western foothills, a thousand-some wolf cavalry were hiding.

A fishy scent rose from the open mouths of the giant wolves while the eyes of the thin demon soldiers burned with a dark green light.

But both these giant wolves famed for being hard to tame and these demon soldiers maintained absolute silence, not making a single sound.

The leader of the wolf cavalry looked very young, his face rather childish. He seemed to still be a teenager.

But his eyes were extremely old, as if they had seen everything in the world and experienced countless varieties of pain.

"Burn all of their provisions."

He looked to the wolf cavalry and calmly finished, "And then kill them in the final charge."

Chapter 1156 – Where the Bright Moon Was Back Then

In the early summer, the humans and demons had fought a grandiose battle around Mount Nuorilang.

The Divine Domain experts of each side stepped onto stage one after the other. The demons suffered grievous casualties and the humans also paid a hefty price.

In no other battle after it did so many Divine Domain experts appear at the same time on the battlefield.

A great array was buried under Mount Nuorilang, and the demon armies had used it to launch a surprise attack and then completely withdraw.

Mao Qiuyu and Daoist Siyuan, who were the two with the greatest understanding of divine arts, had personally inspected the array and confirmed that it could no longer be used.

Many human troops had passed through this valley to reach the north in the aftermath, and none of them had encountered any problems.

No one could have ever expected that the demon armies had not completely retreated.

The battlefield had been in complete chaos as Wang Po and the Demon Commander fought, and two thousand wolf cavalry had used this opportunity to hide in the western foothills.

The western foothills had been affected by the watery clouds drifting from the Western Sea for a longer period of time than the rest of the mountains, and after millions of years of erosion, they had become pockmarked with caves of all sizes.

These wolf cavalry had hidden themselves in the deepest reaches of these caves, avoiding the sharp eyes of the Red Falcons and the

scouting spiritual senses of the humans.

Of course, it also had to do with Divine General He Ming's demand that the army advance quickly to break through the second line of defense, causing the clean-up of the battlefield to be less attentive.

As the human armies traveled through the valley to the highlands in the north so as to continue the fight, the two thousand wolf cavalry remained in the caves, not once poking out their heads. When they were hungry, they would eat dried meat, and when they were thirsty, they would eat the snow on the mountains, living an abnormally excruciating life.

If they had not prepared themselves for this, they might have already starved to death.

Even so, the wolf cavalry had suffered great losses in their many days of concealment, the number of wounded and ill beginning to pile up.

Any wolf cavalry who had injuries too difficult to treat were executed on the spot. The ill were stripped of their armor and weapons and thrown into the caves to see if they would improve or die.

In the end, twelve hundred wolf cavalry survived.

They were thin and tired, but also determined and fearless. The dark green light in their eyes made them seem like actual wolves.

It was truly difficult to endure this long concealment, but the most difficult to endure was the temptation.

Human supply convoys would often pass through the plains below, and the protection of these convoys was not very strong. Coupled with the fact that no one would have expected demons to be hiding in the mountains, the wolf cavalry would just need to charge down the mountain to guarantee an easy victory and loot those supplies. But they knew that they had not hidden here for so

many days just so that they could rob some ordinary supply convoy. Rather, at the most critical moment of the war, they would deliver the heaviest blow to the human army.

The reasoning was very simple, but an extremely unusual leader was still necessary to prevent these cruel wolf cavalry from falling to temptation.

His order was also very unusual.

"Burn all of their provisions and then kill them in the final charge."

There was no fear in the eyes of the demon soldiers, only excitement and passion. But they made no sound, and even the giant wolves only began to pant a little faster.

This had also been an order, one that had been in place for many days, so long that the soldiers had even begun to doubt that they could speak.

Twelve hundred wolf cavalry descended down the mountain.

The leader's gaze followed them, ultimately resting on the distant plains, on that supply convoy that extended for several dozen li.

He had already confirmed the relevant information: the number of human cavalry, human experts, and most importantly... the quantity of supplies.

He knew that Xuelao City had already begun its counterattack so as to divert the attention of the humans and to keep their main force of cavalry around the city.

All of it was to provide him the necessary conditions to burn all the supplies in this convoy.

If he succeeded, the demon armies outside Xuelao City would withdraw into the city as quickly as possible.

As for the twenty thousand tribal warriors outside, they would be callously abandoned.

In his view, these lower-class demons of inferior intelligence were no different from beasts, so it didn't matter how many of them died.

In any case, these lower-class demons were not particularly loyal, nor were they particularly brave in battle, unless they had eaten that medicine.

He had brought back insufficient quantities of medicine from the Longevity Sect, or else this war would not have been so difficult.

If this attack succeeded, unless the human armies were willing to eat the bodies of the lower-class demons, they would have to retreat before the winter set in.

Based on his understanding of the Human race, such a hypocritical and argumentative species could never do such a thing.

This would buy half a year for Xuelao City.

Half a year was enough for many things to happen.

And the momentum of the humans would be dealt a massive blow.

He truly did understand the Human race.

He was confident that internal problems in the Human race would slowly begin to emerge.

Thus...

This was the final battle.

As he gazed at the convoy on the plains, he silently thought to himself:

If we win, we will continue to exist.

If we lose, we will no longer exist.

.....

.....

This young leader was called Gao Huan, and he was over one thousand years old.

Seven hundred years ago, he was serving as the Chief Elder of the Demon Council of Elders.

He had been the youngest Chief Elder in demon history.

But on the day that he became Chief Elder, he was imprisoned by that powerful Demon Lord in the abyss.

He had been imprisoned in the abyss for seven hundred years.

It was only this year that he was released by the newly enthroned Demon Lord.

His face had been pale and emaciated, but he was still alive, and just like he did seven hundred years ago, he looked like a youth.

Plume after plume of dust began to rise from the plains.

The wolf cavalry had begun to attack the supply convoy.

It was too far for the sounds of fighting to reach the summit, so it was still very quiet.

He gazed at the battle on the plains and began to sing.

This song was sung in one of the oldest languages of the Demon race. It was timeworn and lonesome, and the meaning was very simple.

["The Moon had been there, shining upon her returning like a drifting cloud."](#)

The singing voice gradually faded, and when it finally stopped, it was obvious that he had not reached the end of the song.

A hint of focus appeared on his tender face as he gazed at the distant plains, an intense killing intent appearing in his clean and stainless eyes.

'Cruel innocence' was a description that perfectly matched him.

The assault of the wolf cavalry had not proceeded as smoothly as

had been imagined. They quickly encountered obstructions, even challenges.

At the start, the humans had panicked, surprised to see so many wolf cavalry around Mount Nuorilang. But this disorder was quickly pacified, the convoy extending for several dozen li swiftly breaking into ten-some segments, the large wagons working as quickly as possible to bring the head and tail together, forming round circles of wagons. The several thousand cavalry, on the other hand, split into three groups and worked with the circles of carriages to block the assault of the wolf cavalry. Everything proceeded smoothly, calmly, and steadily.

For the human armies to possess this quality was not surprising to Gao Huan. Although this army was completely different from the one he had seen at Luoyang, if the human armies were not even capable of this feat, how could they have dealt successive defeats to the armies of the Divine race and besieged Xuelao City?

What truly made him wary was how easygoing the human soldiers had appeared in this process. Even a commander of many victories would find it hard to nurture such a trait, especially when suddenly attacked by more than a thousand wolf cavalry. This easygoing nature seemed more like preparations had been made in advance.

The wolf cavalry madly attacked the supply convoy with no thoughts of retreat. The defense lines set up by the several thousand human cavalry instantly became rather thin, and swiftly began to totter. An opening was made in the northwest and the battle quickly became a bloody melee.

A heavy black axe silently flew through the sky, cleaving a supply wagon in half and cutting off the head of a peasant. Ten-some Sacred Light crossbow bolts shot out from the cracks in the circle of wagons, all of them striking the chest of a burly demon soldier. His body began to burn with sacred flames that left him a caramelized shell. The entire process occurred without a single

noise.

Deaths were happening at every moment, and different shades of blood carrying identical wills sprinkled over the world. In a short time, around three hundred wolf cavalry had fallen on the plains, and even more human cavalry and members of the supply convoy had stopped breathing.

Such a desperate battle had no effect on Gao Huan.

He stood on a mountain to the west, watching the plains, quietly waiting, his young face devoid of emotion.

To him, both the human soldiers and the demon cavalry who had accompanied him for so many days were all ants.

He seemed like a youth, but he was already incredibly old.

And he had spent seven hundred years in the evil world that was the bottom of the abyss. His body had already begun to rot from the inside, and he could not last for much longer.

In other words, the number of times he could strike with all his strength was limited, so he had to be sure that the one he attacked was the most worthwhile target.

He was currently observing, wanting to find the human commander and those experts hidden in their carriages who were still not willing to fight.

Time slowly passed, and as the sun sank into the west, the shadow cast by the mountain on the plains began to extend. It was on the verge of engulfing all the beings engaged in pitched battle.

The defenses of the human convoy had been broken time and time again, and many of the supply wagons had been burned. From a distance, they appeared to be stars of fire. The one in the most dangerous situation was the first circle of wagons to the north. It was about to be completely broken through by the wolf cavalry, and the minor officials and peasants seemed ready to escape. It seemed like they wanted to surrender.

But the wolf cavalry were already at their limits and met them with certain death. Their sustained frenzied assault had finally managed to break one circle of wagons, but the humans still had ten-some more. Crucially, too many of their comrades and brothers had fallen on the plains, and not even half of the wolf cavalry remained.

On the battlefield, when both sides were reaching their breaking point, it often meant that something was about to change. This was what the situation and willpower demanded, and today was no exception.

Today was a clear day, the sky blue and free of clouds. At this moment, the light of the setting sun was beginning to redden when a white line was suddenly drawn across it.

This white line was straight, stretching from a cliff on a westward mountain to the plains.

The winds howled, stirring grass and rocks, and chilling the atmosphere.

Several thousand drops of rain suddenly dropped from the sky. It was rather chilly as it fell on the faces of the people in the wagon circles, but its taste was perplexingly dull.

A youth had suddenly appeared atop a tent.

His clothes were rather dirty, but they were made of gorgeous materials. On the outside, he wore a suit of flexible armor woven from the thorns of a Monster Bull's tail, which was free of any other adornments. His helmet, however, had a dazzling jewel embedded in its center, but it could not conceal the brilliance exuded by his young face.

"A Divine Domain expert!"

Someone cried out in shock and despair.

This line originates from a poem by Yan Jidao called "临江仙·梦后楼台高锁". In the poem, Yan Jidao is waxing nostalgic over his

relationship with a singing girl. In the past, he was able to watch as the singing girl came back under the moonlight, but now he can no longer see her.

Chapter 1157 – How Deep Is the Deep, Deep Courtyard

Gao Huan turned to the carriage in front of the tent, and the carriage abruptly exploded.

It wasn't because he had such a powerful gaze.

In a cloud of wooden shards and dust, the Qiushan clan head slashed with his sword.

He was a peak Star Condensation expert and the sword was the Dragonscale that Qiushan Jun had insisted he bring, a divine artifact in the upper ranks of the Tier of Legendary Weapons.

The cold and bleak sword glow slashed at the roof of the tent, but with a slight shift of Gao Huan's figure, he appeared on the ground.

His expression had not changed, and he did not attack the Qiushan clan head.

He had been imprisoned at the bottom of the abyss for seven hundred years, unable to see the sun, the Moon, or the stars. He was very unfamiliar with this world and its experts.

He only knew how to divide the people he saw into two categories: those he recognized and those he didn't.

Old acquaintances of his who, like him, had managed to live for so many years, were naturally worthy of his vigilance, but anyone else was not worth his energy.

The Qiushan clan head was not ashamed to see his sword miss, nor was he angry. He simply retreated back into the dust.

Pop. A middle-aged man who looked like a servant had stepped on a small wine pot made of copper.

At this exact moment, the middle-aged man's fist appeared in front of Gao Huan.

Gao Huan appeared somewhat surprised, this fist causing him to react somewhat.

With another pop, three cracks appeared on the ground that he was standing on.

At this exact moment, his hand gripped the fist.

The middle-aged man was the Qiushan clan's Guardian, his cultivation only half a step from the Divine. But the fist that he had launched with all his power had been easily caught by Gao Huan's hand.

This gap in cultivation realms could never be overcome by courage or schemes.

The Qiushan clan Guardian's face paled and his eyes seemed to blaze with golden fire. He hissed and swiftly began to retreat.

Several dozen white eddies appeared in the air, releasing deafening explosions.

The Qiushan clan Guardian groaned as he crashed through a supply wagon. He landed several hundred zhang away, his clothes covered in blood and countless bones broken in his body.

Gao Huan drew back his hand and looked at a carriage even farther in front of him.

Just like a certain logistics officer, the human soldiers had always thought that the Qiushan clan head and Guardian were the strongest members of this convoy.

Gao Huan did not think so.

His gaze had never been on this tent, or on the carriage of the Qiushan clan, but on this particular carriage.

He felt like the true commander of this convoy was in this carriage.

As long as he could kill the people in this carriage, he could succeed in this raid.

This was the conclusion he had obtained after his long observation on the mountain.

Following Gao Huan's gaze, ten-some demon experts left their parties and attacked the carriage.

The air howled as the demon experts dropped like stones from the sky.

If no one stopped them, anyone in the carriage, no matter who they were, would be smashed into a pulp.

At this moment, a cold and anguished zither strummed inside the carriage.

The zither note traveled from the ground to the sky. Though it wasn't very loud, it had a huge range.

The armor of the demon experts became covered in cracks from which smoke seeped out.

In the end, the trajectories of their descents were altered. They did not strike the carriage, instead landing around it.

The ground quaked as the black soil surged into the air like a grandiose waterfall in reverse.

A blind zither player hugging an ancient zither walked out of the carriage.

He tilted his head and listened to his surroundings, his right hand occasionally plucking the strings of the zither.

White and sharp streams of energy left the strings and assaulted the demon experts. Falling leaves seemed to fill the sky.

The ten-some demon experts howled and charged toward the carriage.

For the blind zither player alone to stop so many demon experts was truly rather difficult, but there were still other people inside.

The carriage did not look very large, so no one could have

expected it to contain so many people.

Seven peddlers, six government laborers, three fortune-tellers, two sesame-candy-selling elders and one girl in the market for cosmetic powder were inside.

Several profound streams of heavenly energy engulfed the surrounding plains and fell on the bodies of the demon experts.

Several chains flew through the air, leaving behind trails of blood and fire as they wrapped around the necks and shoulders of those demon experts.

Before all this, an array formed with a sand table was already protecting the carriage.

Gao Huan slightly arched his brows.

He had not expected the Human race to have so many experts.

An innocent smile appeared on his face.

With so many human experts, it was worth his effort this time.

Dull and tasteless rain dropped once more from the sky, washing away those unfathomable streams of heavenly energy and destroying that array in its descent.

The Wenshui Tang clan's Fivekind Man had abnormally solemn expressions, and the blind zither player moved his fingers even faster along the strings.

This young demon expert really did have an unfathomable cultivation. Without any movement, he had broken through their perimeter defenses.

With a flick of Gao Huan's fingers, he jolted away two cudgels. His gaze descended, severing a chain, and he appeared in front of the carriage.

He wanted to tear open the curtain and see who was inside.

The zither strummed like a blaring horn and a zither string that

gave off an aura of blood and iron blocked his path.

This was also fine.

Of the human experts, this blind zither player naturally had to be the strongest.

Gao Huan did not mind focusing his efforts on killing him.

A faint black mist emerged from between his fingers. No matter how strong the winds on the plains were, they could not disperse this mist.

The zither string began to visibly wither, and then it snapped, all its vigor leaving it.

Blood trickled down from the zither player's lips as he retreated to the carriage.

Gao Huan had no intention of letting him live. He slapped his palm at the air.

The twilight suddenly dimmed as night seemed to fall. A massive palm, pitch-black and unreal, dropped down from the sky and toward the carriage.

One of the zither strings had snapped, and although there were still several more intact, they could no longer produce any noise, as the blind zither player had not regained his breath.

Who would block this massive palm?

The carriage window suddenly shattered as two black objects flew out.

Both were black, but it was different from the black of the massive palm which gave off a feeling of terror and oppression. These two black objects gave off an aura of pure dignity.

One was an official's stamp while the other was a judge's block. (TN: A judge's block, 惊堂木, is a large block of wood that an official would strike against a table to intimidate criminals or quiet the room. The literal translation is 'Wood that startles the room'.) The

official's stamp and judge's block came up to meet the massive palm.

With two bangs, they both exploded into pieces, but the black palm also gradually dispersed in the air.

An emaciated elder dressed in a gray robe walked out of the carriage, a mild expression on his face.

Several youths followed him out, their expressions rather nervous. They appeared to be students of some sort.

Too many people had walked out of this carriage, and no one knew how many more could be hiding inside.

Gao Huan had not expected to meet with so many human experts who were half a step from the Divine in such a short time.

When had being half a step from the Divine Domain become so cheap?

Gao Huan confirmed that he did not recognize a single one of these human experts, though the hand movements of the blind zither player did look rather familiar.

He looked to the zither player and asked with an arched brow, "Longevity Sect?"

The blind zither player replied, "Yes."

Gao Huan asked again with his brow arched, "Li Minghe?"

The zither player's expression flickered as he answered, "My teacher."

Gao Huan proudly said, "So that's what it was. Your master and I were once on good terms. If you surrender to me, I will spare your life today."

After saying this, he turned to the gray-robed elder and asked, "And who are you?"

A youth introduced, "This is my clan's Lord Minister."

"I don't recognize him."

Gao Huan said indifferently, and then he suddenly harshly yelled, "You actually dare to poison me!"

He turned to the silent girl.

Perhaps because it had been affected by the battle, the basket the girl was carrying had been spilled on the floor.

Cosmetic powder gradually began to spread along the winds.

This seemed very natural to everybody, so who could have expected it to be a method to poison someone?

Gao Huan's eyes were bursting with cruelty as he stared at the girl.

"Do you know who I am? You want to poison me to death?"

The timidity and nervousness the girl showed in Wenshui City was mostly feigned.

But the stare of this demon expert truly left her incredibly nervous, even robbing her of the ability to move.

Separated by several zhang, Gao Huan reached out a hand to grab her throat. He had a savage look on his face as he prepared to tear her to pieces.

The blind zither player and Minister Wei were on the other side and would not be in time to save her.

The peddlers and fortune-tellers were still contending with the remaining demon experts.

Fortunately, there were still two sesame-candy-selling elders.

They had always made a habit of standing together with the cosmetic-buying girl.

One of the elders drew up the green cloth of the stand to block the winds stirred by Gao Huan's hand.

With a rip, the green cloth was torn to pieces, and as they were

blown away, they became the elder.

He bent at the knee, lowered his waist, calmed his mind, clenched his fist, and then gave a straight punch.

At this sight, Gao Huan cried, "Excellent!"

This punch was uninteresting, commonplace.

But in the eyes of a true expert, it contained the true essence of fairness and composure.

This alone was not enough to move Gao Huan.

His praise was because this elder was using the most traditional technique of the Imperial clan: the Blazing Sun Style!

Gao Huan waved his sleeve to block the combined attack of the blind zither player and Minister Wei while he clenched his fist and punched it at the sesame-candy-selling elder.

The elder's fist shone with a blinding light.

Gao Huan's fist oozed with black smoke.

It was just like how the daytime and dark night were fighting the fiercest of battles in the sky above.

His cultivation level was far above the elder's, but he treated this elder with absolute solemnity, placing deep emphasis on strength and discipline.

His opponent was using the supreme technique of the human Imperial clan, and he was using the supreme technique of the demon-god Imperial clan.

"The Heavenly Demon Art!"

Upon sensing that tyrannical Qi spanning the world and that Demon Breath even thicker than the darkness, the blind zither player shouted.

Upon hearing these words, the faces of Minister Wei and the just-awakened Qiushan clan Guardian suddenly changed.

Just who was this demon expert? How did he know the Heavenly Demon Art, the supreme technique of the demons not taught outside the Imperial clan?

.....

.....

There was a massive boom.

Unsurprisingly, the elder was sent flying.

If not for the fact that the Blazing Sun Style and the Heavenly Demon Art were natural enemies, his injuries might have been even more serious.

There was still one more sesame-candy-selling elder.

Gao Huan's expression remained serious, as if this was a meeting of Imperial clans.

As for the battle itself, he didn't take it too seriously.

These two elders were far inferior to those young masters from the Chen clan of Tianliang County.

There was a light clap.

The two fists met.

It was a light clap, not a thunderous boom.

What did this mean?

Gao Huan, who had already turned to face the blind zither player and Minister Wei, slowly turned his head back.

The demon experts who had joined him in the assault had already been pushed back and the shouts of the wolf cavalry seemed to be getting farther away. The plains had suddenly fallen silent, the only sound left being the crackling of the burning supplies.

As Gao Huan gazed at the sesame-candy-selling elder, a hint of pain appeared in his eyes, as well as a smear of confusion.

The elder slowly raised his head.

His hair was already completely white, but he did not look too old. It was just that his eyes were too calm, like... that well in Wenshui's old estate.

It was that old well.

Nothing in the world could ever cause his eyes to ripple again.

Chapter 1158 – The Happy Tang Old Master

Gao Huan was not looking at the elder's eyes, but at his brows.

He remembered very clearly that there was a mole in one of those brows.

It was really there.

Gao Huan suddenly felt a deep pain.

Heartache.

The instant he saw that mole, he knew that he had been tricked.

Since this elder was here, his surprise attack was doomed to failure.

This also meant that this war was about to end in a human victory.

This was naturally worthy of heartache, especially for someone like him.

"Tang Three! Tang Jingtian!"

Gao Huan madly roared and flew into the sky in a bid to escape.

There was a clattering of metal as several chains flew into the sky, pulling taut as they grabbed onto his ankles.

At the same time, several zither strings stabbed through the flexible armor made from the tail thorns of the Monster Bull.

Minister Wei took out a brush and drew several large words.

An array covered the sky.

The Tang Old Master flew into the air, his fist smashing into Gao Huan's chest.

Blood rained down!

Gao Huan's childish face was covered in blood and madness, and he was still ready to fight it out to the end.

But he noticed out of the corner of his eyes that the flames on the plains were beginning to dim.

The twilight was deepening, and it was precisely the moment when dusk shifted to darkness. Logically speaking, the flames should have been getting clearer and clearer, so why were they dimming?

Were they being extinguished? Impossible!

In Gao Huan's plan, burning the supplies of the human armies had always been the most important goal, far more important than killing any number of human experts.

He had led the demon experts in charging into this wagon circle precisely so that he could distract them.

To a certain extent, he had succeeded. In the battle just now, the wolf cavalry had succeeded in setting many supply wagons on fire.

If nothing unexpected occurred, those flaming supply wagons would have rendered the rest of those wagon circles completely into ash.

How had those fires been extinguished? It had to be mentioned that the wolf cavalry had not been equipped with ordinary tinder, but flammable oil from the frigid seas of the extreme north. Even water and sand would find it very difficult to extinguish this flame!

The entire world gradually became silent.

Gao Huan stood on the plains in utter despair, doing nothing else.

Golden blood drenched his body, and in the last rays of the twilight, he appeared a particularly moving and tragic figure.

He was actually a pure-blooded Imperial.

For a member of the Imperial clan like this to become the Chief Elder of the Council of Elders, what did this mean?

It was no wonder that the previous Demon Lord so feared him

that he wanted to forcibly remove him without regards for the tremors this would send through society.

Countless gazes fell on Gao Huan and then moved to the Tang Old Master.

To the people of the world, the Tang Old Master was unquestionably the most famous yet most enigmatic individual.

In the last two hundred years, he had never left Wenshui, not even when Mo Yu came with the Tianhai Divine Empress's edict to cordially invite him to the capital.

The Tang Old Master looked at Gao Huan and indifferently asked, "You recognize me?"

Many people now remembered the words this demon Divine Domain expert had shouted upon seeing the Tang Old Master.

'Tang Three! Tang Jingtian!'

These extremely simple exclamations had exposed at least three facts:

The Tang Old Master's exalted name, his seniority in the clan, and that this demon expert recognized the Tang Old Master.

"We met many years ago in Luoyang."

Gao Huan looked at the Tang Old Master and said, "I thought that you would remember."

The Tang Old Master calmly gazed at him and said, "Oh, so it was you. Hehe, no wonder you could speak a few human words."

Yes, Gao Huan's grasp of the Human language could not be compared to those dukes of Xuelao City who had developed some interest in the language. He was truly familiar with it. But the Tang Old Master's words clearly had two meanings, and everyone could hear the scorn and harshness within.

He really had recognized him.

"Gao Huan, Gao Yanchen!"

The Tang Old Master stared into his eyes. "I thought you died a long time go. Though I think that right now, you probably wish that you had died earlier."

.....

.....

.....

.....

Gao Huan, courtesy name Yanchen. (TN: In ancient China, it was common practice for males to be bestowed with a second name upon reaching adulthood—the courtesy name, also known as style name. The courtesy name was generally used amongst one's peers while the given name would be used with one's elders.) This was his name amongst the Human race.

This pure-blooded descendant of the Demon Imperial clan of outstanding talent was also the last demon to study in the Human race.

The Tang Old Master knew that he had been a distinguished disciple in the Longevity Sect, but they had truly met in Luoyang.

In the siege of Luoyang, Gao Huan's identity was exposed, but no one dared to kill him, as the demon armies outside had demanded that he be kept safe.

The Tang Old Master and his comrades had wanted to assassinate him, but they were stopped by their elders.

"If Shang knew that you were still alive, he would definitely be ecstatic."

The Tang Old Master looked at Gao Huan and noted, "Back then, he was the one that wanted to kill you the most."

Gao Huan replied, "If any of you had dared to attack me back then, I would be able to crush you to death with just one of my

fingers."

The Tang Old Master agreed, "Yes, back then, you were far stronger than us."

Gao Huan sneered, "If I hadn't been ambushed by you today, I might not have lost."

The Tang Old Master shook his head. "Wrong. Even if you won today, all of you would still lose in the end."

Arching his brow, Gao Huan asked, "Why?"

The Tang Old Master answered, "Because we've already waited for one thousand years. It would be far too unreasonable if we still couldn't win now."

Gao Huan argued, "We besieged Luoyang for so long, but you still didn't lose."

"Luoyang is not Xuelao City, and the greatest difference is that none of you were ever able to enter the city."

The Tang Old Master paused and then continued, "But we are on the verge of entering Xuelao City."

Gao Huan's body went stiff.

The Tang Old Master patted him on the shoulder. "Just concede."

Perhaps the Tang Old Master's palm had shaken him.

A line of tears began to trickle down Gao Huan's face.

He was still smiling, but it was a ghastly smile, and his childish face was thoroughly dyed in pain.

"If His Majesty were still here, you would all die..."

Gao Huan's voice suddenly got louder as he yelled, "No! If he had died a little earlier, none of this would have happened!"

If that mighty Demon Lord had died earlier, how could he have been imprisoned in the abyss seven hundred years earlier? He would assuredly have become a legendary figure of the Demon

race.

And just how many astonishing geniuses like him had appeared in the Demon race over the last one thousand years but had been killed by the old Demon Lord because they threatened his position? How many true talents had been wiped away by the many purges within Xuelao City? Just how much harm had those massacres inflicted on the Demon race?

There was no answer, because that Demon Lord was already dead.

The tears began to come down faster, washing his pale cheeks. Gao Huan felt like his heart was in terrible pain, his left hand gripping the flexible armor against his chest as he found it harder and harder to breathe.

In the end, he slowly toppled to the ground and ceased to breathe.

The Tang Old Master gazed at his corpse. He was quiet for a very long time as he thought about many matters from the past.

Those truly were matters from the past, because it had been almost one thousand years.

The Demon Army had stood on the Plain of the Fallen Willow like a black tide.

Human limbs could often be seen in the mouths of the giant wolves.

Luoyang was besieged. In the span of several months, the city gate had only opened three times.

The very first time had been because the Demon Army had demanded that the humans bring out Gao Huan.

The gate of Luoyang opened and the sunlight spilled in, making the figure of that young demon genius appear even taller.

Gao Huan walked out of the city, his steps firm, his laughter

brash.

Two streams of tears trickled down the Tang Old Master's face.

The crowd was frightened out of its wits.

The cosmetic-buying girl and the general of the supply convoy hurried over to console him.

To many people, the Tang Old Master crying over Gao Huan's corpse was probably a sympathy shared between extraordinary figures.

Minister Wei and the blind zither player knew that this wasn't the case.

What those turbid tears required the most was a toast to celebrate, not soothing words.

"Ah, I'm happy! Too happy!"

The Tang Old Master wept and yelled, "Let's quickly get to Xuelao City! I want to be even happier!"

Chapter 1159 – The Swamp of Blood

The crowd was stunned by the Tang Old Master's exclamation. After some time, they realized that the Old Master truly was incomparably happy, and quickly began to busy themselves.

"Father, please rethink this!"

The Tang First Master was also with the supply convoy. He gripped the Tang Old Master's arm and pleaded for him to rethink his plan.

For such a large supply convoy to make its way through Mount Nuorilang and Starstrewn Gorge overnight was strategically rather risky.

The Tang Old Master was rather displeased by these pleas, and it took some persuasion for him to finally change his mind.

As tears streaked down his face, he gazed at the plains and mountain range before him, and it was like he could already see Xuelao City several thousand li away.

"That's right. I've already waited one thousand years. Why should I be in such a rush today?"

.....

.....

The longer one waited, the more impatient one was, but if it really had been one thousand years, one had to say that this was more patient than most.

The human armies appeared to be very patient. Not even the sudden retreat of the demon armies or the inexplicable assault of the tens of thousands of tribal warriors had caused the battle lines set up by the human armies to waver. It seemed like the humans also had no intention of attacking Xuelao City.

"When I saw Gao Huan die, I suddenly realized that I would also

die, so I have to be a little more cautious."

The Tang Old Master looked at the distant Xuelao City and said, "I must see those walls being broken with my own eyes. I will not permit a single thing to go wrong."

Chen Changsheng replied, "Many people want to personally see such a sight."

The Tang Old Master took a cup of hot tea and nodded in greeting toward Xu Yourong.

If one surveyed the entire world, it was probably only the Tang Old Master that could have the Holy Maiden personally brew him a cup of tea.

Xu Yourong knew that the topic that Chen Changsheng wanted to discuss with the Tang Old Master today was rather inconvenient to listen in on. With a faint smile, she walked out of the tent.

The silence in the tent persisted for so long that the steam rising from the cup of tea gradually faded away.

"Tang Thirty-Six is not sick. He was poisoned."

Chen Changsheng stared into the Tang Old Master's eyes.

"Your Holiness's divine eyes are like torches and will naturally not see wrongly. The effect of that poison is not severe. It will only cause him to have an unrelenting fever."

The Tang Old Master had made no attempts to hide his intentions. He admitted to this fact with extreme indifference, declaring, "The Tang clan requires that he live."

He had admitted to it because Chen Changsheng had already guessed the truth. That it had not been exposed back then meant that it would never be exposed.

The Tang Old Master left the tent, making his way toward that small mountain in the distance.

Xu Yourong returned to the tent.

She had not asked that day, and she would not ask today either, but Chen Changsheng still felt like he should say something, though he didn't know what to say.

"Every person is selfish, especially when they're being selfless."

Xu Yourong used this vague and ambiguous statement to pass judgment on this matter.

.....

.....

The demons around Xuelao City, probably aware of the fate of the isolated force led by Gao Huan, quickly began to retreat. Under the cover of their accompanying troops, the wolf cavalry broke free of the human black-armored cavalry and returned to the city. A small portion of the two hundred thousand tribal warriors were let into the city, but the majority were abandoned outside.

The chaotic battlefield gradually calmed down, and the human armies did not pursue. The end was already in sight for this sudden final battle. The tribal warriors stood between the tightly shut gate and the grim ranks of the human armies, their eyes filled with helplessness, despair pervading their motley of tents.

The morale of the demon armies was extremely low, but it was said that a cornered animal still had the will to fight. It was perfectly fine for the human armies to wait some more. One could confidently presume that as time passed, the situation would only get better, and these tribal warriors outside the city might even choose to retreat without a fight.

Yet after Divine General He Ming received a report sent by Red Falcon and pondered its details over a meal, he issued an order that the advance would continue. The Central Army would begin to clean up the tribal warriors gathered outside the city while the Eastern Army and Western Army were ordered to converge as quickly as possible.

Many officers and soldiers did not understand this order, but they carried it out with great resolve. This was because Divine General He Ming had gone to Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong's tent and received their support before issuing this order, and Shang Xingzhou on his small mountain had remained silent.

.....

.....

Every person would have their own memories, and tens of thousands of people would have tens of thousands of different memories. The memories of one event might be similar in the general outline, but many differences would often manifest in the details. Guan Feibai had always believed that it was in the middle of the ninth month. He was lying in his tent, being treated by a cleric of the Li Palace, when he suddenly heard the blast of the city gate being blown open several dozen li away. Raising the tent flap, he saw that the leaves of a tree on a hillside were so red that they seemed to be seeping blood. But Bai Cai persisted in the belief that it had been early in the ninth month, when the trees growing outside Xuelao City still maintained their last patches of green. The reason the leaves that Guan Feibai had seen were red was that he had killed too many demons and his eyes were red from bloodlust.

One did not need to understand why these differences in memory occurred. In short, one day, as the autumn was setting in, the human armies launched their final and fiercest assault against Xuelao City.

The last Sacred Light crossbow bolts shot into Xuelao City like a torrential rain.

A division of wolf cavalry that was just preparing to set out and receive the tribal warriors had the terrible misfortune of being struck by this rain of arrows, taking grievous casualties.

Like giants, catapults moved to the plains in front of Xuelao City.

The demons within the city felt like they were seeing the ancestral spirits of the Gruel clan, and their faces paled.

Giant stones, mixed with gunpowder, flew through the sky, drawing out extremely high arcs before barely managing to thump into the city. Even more stones smashed straight against the walls, inflicting little direct damage. However, the rain of stone shards falling against the ground inflicted mass casualties on the tribal warriors below.

At the height of the battle, two demi-human tribes suddenly launched an attack from the northwest. The demi-human North-Pacifying Army had done nothing but wander around the plains upon leaving Cong Province, but this had turned out to be nothing but a smokescreen. The true demi-human reinforcements had detoured through the grasslands of the Elf race, traversing through the mountain ranges of the west. Under the cover of the Western Army, they silently approached Xuelao City, waiting for the crucial moment to deliver a fatal strike to the demons.

Yet another powerful foe caused the demon armies to finally crumble. More and more tribes began to scatter and flee.

As the setting sun dyed the entire plains red, the Demon Commander, seeing that the situation was extremely dire, sought to sneak into the human camp and kill an important figure like Chen Changsheng to turn the tides, or at least temporarily slow the demons' defeat.

In a swamp to the south of the city, where the mists were so thick that not even wind could scatter them and not even the garish red rays of dusk could pierce through, Wang Po had been waiting for the Demon Commander for many days.

When the Demon Commander borrowed the suicidal assault of several hundred wolf cavalry to hide herself amongst the blood and corpses and sneak into the camp, Wang Po pulled out his blade.

The bright glow of the blade tore open the swamp's thick mists, illuminating the entire world.

Wang Po did not launch a sneak attack. His approach was extremely forthright and open.

The Demon Commander glanced at the camp in front of her, regret appearing in her eyes.

The human armies were currently pushing into Xuelao City, and the main camp had also been moved up several dozen li.

The figures of Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong were already clearly visible.

"Ah!"

The Demon Commander let out a howl of anger and reluctance.

The corpses of the human and demon soldiers around her began to explode, causing a rain of blood to descend.

Blood flowed on the armor, drenching the green rust and bright jewels, which now exuded an aura of cruelty and madness.

She turned around, took that massive curved blade from her back, and went to meet that bright blade glow.

With a crack, a fissure several li long appeared on the plains. In it were underground springs and melted earth.

The Demon Commander swayed twice but quickly steadied herself.

Her extremely short body looked like that of a giant in everyone else's eyes.

She raised her long blade and charged into the swamp.

The ground quaked, cold winds were sliced to shreds, and the thick mists were cleaved open.

The two most powerful blades in the world clashed once more.

Terrifying blade intents roiled the mists into tornadoes, quickly

clearing the air.

The tens of thousands of people on the plains could clearly see what was happening in the swamp.

Though the black soil of the swamp was extremely soft and wet, the two figures moved across it so quickly that they were blurs.

Two blade glows would occasionally shine over the world, casting the black mud into the sky.

Gradually, the truths concealed by the swamp for countless years were exposed. Here were piles of white bones, treasure chests filled with gold, and many secret chambers.

These forgotten remnants of history, these potential stories from the past, were sliced into pieces by these two powerful blades.

In front of absolute strength, everything else lost meaning.

With a thunderous boom, Wang Po's blade clashed directly with the Demon Commander's.

All the water in the swamp was sent into the air and fell back down in a muddy rain. The soft and wet mud was also sent flying, falling back down in a circle with a radius of several dozen li. Both demons and humans were drenched in an unbearable stench.

A furrow, ten-some li long, appeared on the plains.

Wang Po stood at the end of this furrow, half his body buried in the ground.

His face was pale and two trickles of blood were streaming from the corners of his lips. His hand was trembling and another chunk had been hacked out of the blade.

The Demon Commander fared no better. She traced a white line in the sky before slamming into the gates of Xuelao City.

All the demon soldiers on the city walls heard that boom and felt the walls shake.

The Demon Commander vomited blood, slightly clearing up her blood vessels. Just when she wanted to fly back to the top of the city walls, a shadow fell over her face.

This shadow originated from a massive kite.

In the light of the sunset, this kite seemed to be ablaze.

It was an excellent fit with the painting hanging beneath the kite.

Other than the painting of Sangharama Temple ablaze, a person had also been tied to the kite.

The wind blowing against the white paper caused it to flap.

Xiao Zhang leapt toward the city gate, the Frost God Spear in hand, a strange babbling shout on his lips.

Chapter 1160 – A Fire Burns in the Heart of Every Person

In the earlier stages of the war, Xiao Zhang had twice been heavily injured, and his sneak attack on Black Robe from the carriage had only worsened his wounds. His pursuit of the Demon Commander on the kite now was also very forced. But his resolve and determination when striking with his spear were anything but forced. The strike was imbued with a fearless momentum and a chilling and fierce energy.

There was a dull crumpling sound as a bloody hole appeared on the Demon Commander's armor, the bright jewels shattering into shards of ice.

She let out a furious howl and turned her right hand, her blade descending like a crescent moon toward Xiao Zhang's shoulder.

Xiao Zhang fell to the ground, the white paper on his face now thoroughly soaked with blood, but an unbridled and satisfied laughter could be heard behind it.

He felt like all the bones in his body had broken. While he was in great pain, he felt an even greater pleasure.

He was confident that no matter how strong the Demon Commander was, she would be incapable of fighting for a short time. Even more importantly, he had realized his promise to Shang Xingzhou.

He had sent the painting to Xuelao City.

The wolf cavalry on the plains began to charge toward Xiao Zhang, the Second Demon General's figure prominent among them. Just when everyone thought that Xiao Zhang would die, two gorgeous sword glows shone and melded, transforming into a beautiful rainbow.

The kite crashed into the city gate, carrying the painting

depicting the burning of Sangharama Temple. Under the light of the setting sun, it suddenly began to blaze.

Intense and breathtaking flames flowed along the city gate like a waterfall.

The rainbow formed of sword glows forced back the Second Demon General and the wolf cavalry, at the same time fanning the flames.

This fire lasted for a very long time, punctuated ten-some times by some sort of explosion. But no matter what methods the Demon Generals used, they could not extinguish the flames.

From dusk to late in the night, the gate of Xuelao City blazed, looking just like a massive wall of fire.

Many creatures could not sleep tonight. The escaping demon soldiers and the human cavalry tasked with chasing them down naturally could not sleep, and neither could anyone inside or outside Xuelao City.

The Tang Old Master and Shang Xingzhou stood on the slope of the small mountain, quietly gazing at the distant wall of fire for the entire night like it was the world's most beautiful sight.

Perhaps they were thinking about the siege of Luoyang, Sangharama Temple burned to ashes, or perhaps they were thinking about nothing at all.

.....

.....

At dawn, the fire was finally extinguished.

The gate had been so thoroughly burned that only some of its frame remained, through which one could faintly make out its outline. The majority of it had been rendered into ash, leaving it incapable of stopping any foes.

No one knew what sort of secret that painting depicting the

burning of Sangharama Temple contained or why those flames had been able to burn so fiercely. They could only guess that it was related to the Tang clan.

The entire war strategy had probably been planned by Shang Xingzhou, perhaps with contributions from Wang Zhice.

Any method that one thought about for several centuries was certain to be terrifying.

This was precisely the reason Chen Changsheng had reached that conclusion when he was traversing that deserted street in Wenshui City and saw that one dog.

Elders were truly very terrifying.

.....

.....

The greatest barrier to entering Xuelao City had disappeared, but the human armies did not begin their assault the next morning. Instead, they aimed all their catapults and ballistae at the vanished city gate, firing the occasional ballista bolt or stone to prevent the demon soldiers from repairing the gate.

The human armies had also suffered grievous casualties, Xiao Zhang was still in a coma, and even Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong had been injured. They would be unable to fight with their full power for a short time, and a certain period of time was needed to recover. Moreover, the two divisions of demi-human reinforcements who had traveled over such great distances truly did need some time to rest.

In the Central Army Camp, Chen Changsheng met the commanding generals of the demi-human reinforcements and realized that he knew them. The commander of the first reinforcement army was the Shi clan leader, but Xiaode was their primary fighting power. The other army was commanded by the Bear tribe leader, but Chen Changsheng did not see Xuanyuan Po,

which he felt was rather strange.

At noon, a more descriptive report was sent to the main camp. After silently reading it, Archbishop An Lin said, "The Brown Bear tribe is to be exterminated."

In order to differentiate them from the Bear tribe that lived in the watershed of the Red River, the Bear tribe that lived on the snowy plains was often called the Brown Bear tribe. Perhaps because there was too much mixing of blood or because of frequent trade relationships, many spies appeared amongst the Brown Bear tribe. When Chen Changsheng was bringing Su Li back to the south and this time when he was bringing back Xiao Zhang, it had been spies from the Brown Bear tribe that had sold him out.

Both the Great Zhou Dynasty and White Emperor City had a deep-seated hatred for the Brown Bear tribe. If they hadn't needed the Brown Bear tribe's understanding of demon movements, they might have already dealt with them. With the entire war now decided, the Brown Bear tribe would naturally have no good end.

Chen Changsheng understood that Archbishop An Lin found this rather unbearable and wanted him to issue an amnesty, but after thinking about it, he decided not to respond.

Archbishop An Lin could only sigh at his silence, and then she added, "The elders of the Wolf tribe and their chief want to see Your Holiness, but they lack the rank."

In this war, the most outstanding and accomplished performance in the demi-human armies had not come from the Shi clan, famed for its bravery and power, or from the Bear tribe, famed for its ferocity and love of battle. Instead, it had come from the inconspicuous Wolf tribe, which rarely engaged in head-on confrontations.

Just half a month ago, the Wolf tribe had been tasked with ambushing demon reinforcements from Lelang County but ended up encountering one thousand wolf cavalry. The battle had been

extremely intense, and if the Wolf tribe had not put everything on the line and paid a disastrous price to completely exterminate the wolf cavalry, the demons would have broken through the siege and threatened the demi-human reinforcements.

Chen Changsheng, according to Zhexiu's request, had given a part of the Elf grasslands to the Wolf tribe. But every time he thought about how these Wolf tribe elders had driven the child Zhexiu out of their tribe, leaving him to wander the snowy wastes, he felt angry, especially toward the upper ranks of the tribe.

For the sake of the Wolf tribe's achievements, he had agreed to meet their chief and elders, but he was not prepared to see them for too long.

The moment the Wolf tribe elders and chief walked into the tent, they immediately kneeled, adopting postures of absolute devotion.

When they raised their heads, Chen Changsheng froze. It was not merely because of the sincerity in their eyes, but because they were all very young.

Why were the elders and chief of the Wolf tribe all so young?

And where did this heartfelt love and respect come from? Was it just because the grasslands that belonged to the Wolf tribe had been gifted by Chen Changsheng?

Chen Changsheng sized up the elders and chief, and upon seeing their attire, he suddenly understood what the answer was.

Xuelao City in the early autumn was already rather cold, but these elders were thinly attired, and both their sleeves and pantlegs had been cut very short.

Many years ago, when Chen Changsheng was standing outside the Li Palace and saw Zhexiu for the first time in the morning sun, Zhexiu had been dressed exactly like this.

He finally understood just how powerful Zhexiu's influence had been on the Wolf tribe.

The current Wolf tribe probably had countless Zhexius. It was no wonder they were so strong.

It was also easy to understand why the Wolf tribe's elders and chief were so young. They were all Zhexiu's followers.

Their successful ascension to these positions represented countless battles and a ruthless purge.

In this process, many elders of the Wolf tribe had probably died or been forced to relinquish their authority.

But where was Zhexiu in all this?

.....

.....

Good news was coming in from all over.

Whether it was the demi-human reinforcements or the two human armies converging on Xuelao City from the east and west, or even the third division of cavalry coming as reinforcements from the south, they were all claiming victory after victory. The demon cities were being broken one after the other, and many tribes had already covertly sent representatives to inquire with the human armies on the terms of surrender.

Xuelao City was alone and without reinforcements. The human armies were gathering outside its walls in preparation to assault the city, but they did not surround it, and they paid no attention to the gates of the city that faced north. They lacked the soldiers for this, and they also hoped that leaving an avenue of escape could lessen the fighting will of the demons.

Based on the scouting reports, few demons were using the northern gates to flee the city, and there were certainly no soldiers among them.

It seemed that the demons were preparing for the final battle within Xuelao City.

No one wanted to see this, but neither was anyone worried. Everyone was well aware that human victory was inevitable.

The destruction of a dynasty was right before their eyes. The end of an era of history was close at hand.

The demons had once ruled this world. In the eyes of other races, they had been gods, eternally standing high above, possessing an unimaginable intelligence and culture. But now they were gradually descending into the earth, about to sink into an abyss from which they would never climb out.

Let alone the demons, even their foes, the many commanders of the Human and Demi-human races, did not understand why this was, and felt a faint disappointment and frustration. Was this highly-developed civilization that had been built up over so many years and had accumulated so many resources about to suddenly come to an end?

Just like the gate of Xuelao City, it appeared like it would not topple for tens of thousands of years, but it ended up being burned to smoke by a fire.

"The battering of the wind and rain will bring everything down."

Xu Yourong stood on a grassy slope, the wound on her left shoulder bandaged by a white cloth. She had a rather haggard complexion, but a very calm expression.

"There are many examples of the cultured being defeated by barbarians, but we are the cultured ones here. The problem with the demons lies within themselves. They are no longer a match for this era, so there is no medicine that can save them."

In both aspects decided when they were born, like intelligence, and in how they were treated afterward, the high-class demons and low-class demons had always been separated by a massive gap. Alas, in the aspect of reproduction, the lower-class demons played a vital role in the Demon race. This sense of fragmentation and

this undeniable fact would assuredly lead demon society to grow more and more abnormal.

Many years ago, Grand Scholar Tungus was already aware of this problem. After thinking about it for a very long time, he decided to place his hope on the humans. In his view, the humans and higher-class demons had similar appearances, and more importantly, they possessed similar levels of intelligence. It was on this basis that he and that Pope engaged in a series of projects, ultimately creating the new beings that were the Eight Great Mountain Men. Unfortunately, he still failed to realize his theories.

Chen Changsheng understood what she meant, but he still felt rather emotional.

At this moment, many people around the camp raised their heads to the sky.

Geese were calling out as line after line streaked across the sky. Ten-some Red Geese and Red Falcons were flying in from the south.

Just what had happened that would necessitate so many Red Geese and Red Falcons?

Everyone had solemn and nervous expressions.

The Red Geese and Red Falcons had brought shocking news.

The Prince of Xiang had betrayed them.

Chapter 1161 – When the General Is Abroad

The Prince of Xiang had not betrayed the humans and entered Xuelao City.

Even if he did want to do this, none of his subordinates would follow them.

So to be more precise, he had not betrayed the humans, but rebelled.

He had taken twenty thousand prepared soldiers from Snowhold Pass and had led them back to the capital to request the emperor to abdicate.

This news sent the camp into chaos. Horses galloped across the plains, and many gazes were aimed at a certain tent in the Western Army.

Wasn't the Prince of Xiang recovering from his heavy injuries? How had he suddenly appeared tens of thousands of li away in the capital?

On the evening of the same day, all the commanders of the human armies, excluding the commander in charge of monitoring Xuelao City, the important figures of the Orthodoxy, and the representatives from the cultivation sects gathered in the main tent of the Central Army Camp.

Divine General He Ming stood in front of the sand table, the expression on his face mercurial in the light of the lanterns.

Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong silently sat behind him.

The tent was abnormally quiet, the mood growing more oppressive by the minute. Finally, a noise from outside broke the silence.

A hastily-dressed middle-aged man was escorted into the tent: the Prince of Xiang.

The assembled officers were stunned. Only after careful examination did they realize that though this person had a very similar face, figure and bearing to the Prince of Xiang, he was just a substitute.

The Prince of Xiang was an expert of the Divine Domain. Beneath his rather comical plumpness was the concealed bearing of an expert, but this substitute was lacking this.

"Deceiver!"

Someone in the crowd shouted a resentful curse.

The moment they realized that this was the Prince of Xiang's substitute, everyone knew that the news of the rebellion in the south was true.

At this moment, many people recalled that in a battle a few days ago to the north of Starstrewn Gorge, the Prince of Zhongshan bravely fought and unfortunately sustained wounds so heavy that he needed to be sent back to the south.

The people in the tent looked at each other, wanting to confirm just who else had left besides the Prince of Xiang and the Prince of Zhongshan, and who had remained.

There were three princes of the Chen clan in the tent. They had rather pale complexions, not because they were worried about being suspected, but because they were now sure that the Prince of Xiang had abandoned them.

Peng Shihai and his fellows had particularly nasty expressions. They had extremely close relationships with the Prince of Xiang, or even intimate ones. No one had expected the Prince of Xiang to deceive them as well.

While they were leading the troops in bloody battle, the Prince of Xiang had taken those other people with the intent of leading a rebellious army on the capital. How could anyone not be infuriated by this contrast?

"What do they want to do? Do they really think that changing regimes is so easy?"

Daoist Siyuan had a very dark and profound look in his eyes as he gave Peng Shihai a ghostly stare.

Peng Shihai coldly snorted, wanting to say something, but ultimately deciding to keep his mouth shut.

"Why wasn't there any message from Xunyang City?"

Another person suddenly thought of this problem.

Xunyang City was essentially the base camp for the northern expedition. All the supply convoys and reinforcements were sent out from there. It played an extremely important role, and negotiations between all the factions before the war ultimately led Cao Yunping, the Divine Domain expert most trusted by all sides, to supervise the city.

For the Prince of Xiang to fake his injuries and return to Snowhold Pass in secret so that he could organize a rebel army was not too difficult for him. However, if the rebel army wanted to reach the capital, it had to pass through Xunyang City. Given Cao Yunping's strength and the army defending Xunyang City, if they could not destroy the rebel army, they could at least delay them for a very long time. It was simply impossible for there to have been no warning.

Since the rebellion had already been taking place for some time, Xunyang City's silence could only stand for one extremely awful possibility.

"Someone personally saw Cao Yunping and the Prince of Xiang together."

Divine General He Ming's head remained fixed on the sand table as he casually said, "It was right outside the capital."

The words caused the tent to descend into silence once more.

All the troops of the Great Zhou Dynasty were in front of Xuelao City, as were all its experts, and even Cao Yunping had cast his lot with the Prince of Xiang. There was no one left to stop the rebel army.

The capital had no walls.

If the goal was to end the rebellion and save the emperor, retreat was the only option. But Xuelao City was right in front of them, its city gate shattered, the demons on the verge of extinction. If the human armies were to retreat, the demons would get a chance to catch their breath, and who knew how the course of history would change?

Who would dare bear this responsibility?

It had to be said that the Prince of Xiang had chosen the ideal time to rebel, or perhaps the worst.

"Does he want to be condemned for the rest of time?"

The rolling of carriage wheels came from outside the tent, accompanied by an elderly voice.

The Tang Old Master entered the tent, aiming an indifferent gaze at the Prince of Xiang's substitute akin to the look he would give to a corpse.

Everyone knew that no matter how this matter ended, this person would not survive.

The Prince of Xiang's substitute got up from the ground, tidied his clothes, and smiled at the Tang Old Master. "Sir's words are incorrect."

He had naturally prepared himself for death, but one had to admit that his ability to remain so calm made him seem rather elegant.

"His Highness naturally does not wish to affect the foundation of the Human race."

The substitute looked around him and continued, "He entrusted me with the mission of telling everyone that before this esteemed audience enters Xuelao City and burns down the Demon Palace, the army will not take one step into the capital."

Peng Shihai harshly questioned, "Then what if we immediately return south? Will he commit his treasonous deed? Does he want to threaten us with this?"

The substitute sternly reproved, "Wrong again! His Highness said that if this esteemed audience unexpectedly chooses to return south, then he will tie his hands and wait to be jailed, though he will view you all with contempt."

Some of the people in the tent drily laughed, though this quickly stopped. This was not the time for laughter, and these words, upon careful thought, seemed to be edged with ice.

"Does His Highness really think he can succeed?"

Divine General He Ming raised his head and stared into the substitute's eyes. "Do you really think that he can succeed?"

The substitute smiled and said, "At the start, I also thought that it was the ravings of a madman, but His Highness ended up convincing me."

The entire strength of the Great Zhou Dynasty was currently gathered outside Xuelao City. If the Prince of Xiang's goal was to fight his way into the capital, occupy the Imperial Palace, and force the emperor to abdicate, it truly would be very easy. The problem was, how many people would support him in the aftermath?

Chen Changsheng would assuredly lead the Orthodoxy in a counterattack, and he had the cultivation sects represented by Holy Maiden Peak and the Mount Li Sword Sect, and also the noble clans represented by the Tang clan. Even if the Prince of Xiang temporarily had no need to worry about Chen Changsheng's relationship with the future female Emperor of the Demi-humans,

just these forces alone were hard to resist.

So why was the Prince of Xiang still bold enough to rebel? It could only be that he was sure that Chen Changsheng and the Li Palace, and the factions that supported them, would have no effect on him.

Where did his confidence spring from?

No matter how one saw it, the first prerequisite was Shang Xingzhou's stance, which side he had chosen to stand on.

Many gazes turned to the small carriage outside the tent.

The Prince of Xiang's substitute smiled and said, "His Highness requests the venerable Daoist to be at ease. He will assuredly prioritize the world and will not act rashly."

It appeared that the Prince of Xiang had truly entrusted his hopes to Shang Xingzhou.

And it truly was only Shang Xingzhou that could intimidate Chen Changsheng in the aftermath, either through his status as teacher or his seniority in the Orthodoxy.

And the entire continent knew that Shang Xingzhou did not like Chen Changsheng.

As long as the Human race could unite the world, as long as Taizong's descendants remained on the throne, just who was actually the emperor did not seem important.

If Yuren died, the Prince of Xiang would unquestionably be the best candidate for the throne.

But the entire continent knew that Shang Xingzhou liked Yuren.

Why was the Prince of Xiang willing to wager that Shang Xingzhou would support him?

The tent became extremely quiet, everyone staring at the small carriage and waiting for Shang Xingzhou's decision.

The Tang Old Master suddenly left the tent, because he knew what Shang Xingzhou would do. If it were him, he would make the same choice.

The young Daoist boy lifted up the carriage curtain and jumped out of the carriage. He looked at the generals and experts in the tent and said in his young and uncertain voice, "Ancestor says that we're just about to break into the city, so these trifling matters can be discussed later."

Several cold gasps could be heard in the quiet tent.

Everyone was flabbergasted.

His most beloved student was about to die in a shameless rebellion, yet he was treating it with such indifference...

In the venerable Daoist's eyes, the extermination of the demons really was more important than anything else.

Respect was one thing, but obedience was another. Not everyone would heed Shang Xingzhou's will, and many of the generals looked to Divine General He Ming.

Divine General He Ming had been the commanding general personally chosen by the emperor, and many people had their theories on why he had been chosen.

"His Majesty said to me that when the general is abroad, there are some orders from the sovereign that he cannot obey, that a general is not blind."

He Ming added, "And there has not even been a decree from the capital."

The tent fell into an uproar. No one had expected him to take this stance.

Xue He's cheeks were bulging. He was clearly furious.

Linghai Zhiwang's complexion was even gloomier, his hands trembling within his sleeves. He had already prepared himself to

strike.

One person looked to a certain corner, where Wang Po had been standing the entire time. The Wu clan head and the elders of Mount Li's Sword Hall were standing by him.

They had maintained silence all this time, not even glancing at Chen Changsheng, but everyone knew that they would stand on Chen Changsheng's side, perhaps standing together with Xu Yourong.

Chen Changsheng was not looking at Xu Yourong, but calmly staring at the young Daoist boy standing next to the carriage. He seemed to be in a daze.

Somebody coughed.

He came to his senses and said, "So be it."

Chapter 1162 – The Last Supper and Conversation

'So be it.' Whether or not there would be a happy conclusion, the matter before their eyes needed to be finished first.

Just like Shang Xingzhou had said, the thing right before everyone's eyes was Xuelao City.

As Xuelao City got closer and closer, the distance between Chen Changsheng and that small carriage got smaller and smaller. It was now only ten-some li away, and he could clearly see the person inside.

It was parked on the slope of another small mountain. There was a dried-up tree on this slope, and several jackdaws were perched on it. Their eyes weren't red, so they probably had never eaten human flesh.

The small carriage was parked under the tree. The young Daoist boy was crouched on the ground, digging at something.

Chen Changsheng suddenly said, "I think the White Crane tricked you."

Xu Yourong's arms were around her waist and she was wearing a simple dress. She turned her head and asked, "Tricked me about what?"

After some hesitation, Chen Changsheng said, "I wasn't that pretty when I was little."

Xu Yourong faintly smiled. "Jealous?"

Chen Changsheng gazed at the distant mountain slope and softly grunted.

Xu Yourong replied, "Probably only your senior brother and that person know what you looked like when you were little. When you get the chance, you should ask."

The chance came sooner than he expected.

One evening, Shang Xingzhou sent a message asking Chen Changsheng to come over.

The master and disciple ate several papayas personally roasted by the young Daoist boy, serving as their last supper. And then, they began a conversation.

At the start of this conversation, they did not discuss Xuelao City which was right in front of them, or the urgent matter of the capital, and they certainly did not wax nostalgic about their life in Xining Village's old temple.

The style of this conversation was very like Shang Xingzhou's attitude to the world, and was also a little similar to Chen Changsheng's path of the sword: forthright and concealing behind it a deep contempt.

"The White Emperor once said that no one on this continent would trust me. This is where I am inferior to you."

Shang Xingzhou added, "But that is because all of you are young, with limitless possibilities, and I am already old."

A logical connection did not seem to exist between the two statements.

Chen Changsheng quietly listened.

"When death, this greatest fear of all, is right before one's eyes, anyone would find it difficult to escape."

Shang Xingzhou continued, "In this aspect, I am far inferior to you. I am very anxious, so there were several matters in the last few years that I acted on with undue haste."

Chen Changsheng was sure that he had understood.

It turned out that some other things had been concealed behind the contempt.

This counted as an explanation and could even be counted as an

apology, but to put matters simply, these were things that Shang Xingzhou could never say straight out.

This was how elders were.

Chen Changsheng suddenly felt rather sad and no longer wished to continue this topic.

"I feel like something is off about this matter."

Shang Xingzhou was completely unconcerned about the rebellion in the capital, and Chen Changsheng was also not terribly concerned. What truly required his concern was still Xuelao City.

The demons had lost too quickly.

It was not merely the master and disciple who thought this. This was a view shared by every level of society.

In the initial plan, the Human race had prepared to fight for three years, perhaps even longer, but they ended up finishing the war in half a year.

This made Chen Changsheng feel uneasy.

"Black Robe might be up to something, but she will never succeed. Those accustomed to being enigmatic simply have no understanding of true strategy. In the end, they will die in the mouse hole of their enigmas. Three hundred years ago, if not for Wang Zhice, I and your martial uncle would have already killed her. She's not even worth mentioning."

Shang Xingzhou had an extremely harsh evaluation of that most renowned Demon Military Advisor. It was not merely because he had the right to evaluate her strategy and mystery, but because he and Black Robe had quietly been exchanging blows for centuries and had grown extremely familiar with each other.

He took out a porcelain bottle and gave it to Chen Changsheng. "This medicine's effect is no worse than the Cinnabar Pill's, but its recipe is simple. The primary ingredient is the fire of the ancestral

spirits beneath White Emperor City."

Chen Changsheng momentarily froze at these words. Opening the bottle and sniffing, he somewhat uncertainly asked, "The Golden Cash Fur from the Monastery of Eternal Spring?"

Shang Xingzhou affirmed, "Correct."

Confused, Chen Changsheng said, "At the time, I really had planned on using this herb to control the strength of the medicine, but..."

Shang Xingzhou asked, "I taught you the medical arts. Did you think you could surpass me?"

Chen Changsheng felt a bit choked up at these words, and then he became happy as he thought, no wonder the casualties this time were much smaller.

Shang Xingzhou said, "Stop refining Cinnabar Pills. You're not a woman, so why are you bleeding every month?"

Chen Changsheng choked up again. His jaw slightly dropped as he struggled to find something to say.

For some reason, Shang Xingzhou was a little angry at his appearance. "There's nothing else. Leave."

He was still harsh and occasionally extremely cold.

Chen Changsheng suddenly recalled how when he was living in Xining Village's old temple, his master's emotions would always sway between cold indifference and harshness, just like in today's conversation.

He was harsh more often than he was cold.

Shang Xingzhou had been cold to the young Chen Changsheng precisely because he was afraid that he would end up liking this young Daoist boy that he had raised.

Because he knew that he was using Chen Changsheng.

Later on, he so hated Chen Changsheng precisely because he hated that part of him that was related to Chen Changsheng.

Both master and disciple knew this, and they had talked about it in the Orthodox Academy and the Mausoleum of Books. There was no need to bring it up now.

The current Shang Xingzhou was probably very blessed, because he no longer needed to worry about liking the young Daoist that he had raised.

As Chen Changsheng gazed at the young Daoist boy outside the carriage, whose face was blackened from the smoke of the fire, Chen Changsheng thought to himself, you are also blessed.

Before leaving, he finally couldn't help but ask that question.

"Master, when I was little, was I pretty?"

Shang Xingzhou pondered the question and replied, "I suppose you were decent."

.....

.....

"Both your students have treated you rather decently."

After Chen Changsheng left the mountain slope, the Tang Old Master came back from the rear of the mountain.

Ever since coming to the front lines, the Tang Old Master had not stayed with the rest of the Tang clan, but spent every day with Shang Xingzhou.

Shang Xingzhou replied, "It's not like you don't know how these two rascals bossed me around ten years ago."

The Tang Old Master sighed, "That's still more filial than my grandson. That little brute almost took apart the clan's ancestral hall."

Shang Xingzhou glanced at him and asked, "Just what do you

want to say?"

The Tang Old Master earnestly asked, "Are you still doing well?"

Shang Xingzhou was quiet for a while. "Not too well."

The Tang Old Master turned to Xuelao City, illuminated under the starlight. "It's already come to this. You have to wait a little longer."

Shang Xingzhou replied, "All those people I personally sent off weren't able to see it, so I naturally have to."

.....

.....

The human armies did not withdraw to the south. They continued to prepare for the final assault. The Western and Eastern Armies continued to clear the strongholds and forts in a circle around the city, but it was impossible to completely suppress the news of the rebellion. It quickly spread, and the atmosphere in the camps grew increasingly tense.

Perhaps because the Demon Lord had learned of the internal strife amongst the humans, the demons sent out their wolf cavalry several times to counterattack, but they were all firmly beaten back by the human armies. To the consternation of the humans, the upper society of the Demon race still had no intention of forsaking Xuelao City, but it was impossible to tell what they were thinking.

One morning, at five o'clock, Chen Changsheng opened his eyes, waking from his sleep. After calming his mind for five breaths, he got out of bed, whereupon An Hua helped him put on his clothes and shoes. He washed his face and rinsed his mouth, then walked out of the tent. After walking several times around the hills where the Central Army had set up their tents, he began to blankly stare at the mist-shrouded Xuelao City.

Even after his fate had been changed in the Mausoleum of Books,

his life was still simple, austere, and healthy, but it was not as strict and disciplined as it had been ten-some years ago.

In truth, it had been a long time since he had gotten up this early.

At six, Xu Yourong woke up, and the two ate breakfast together.

After eating two bowls of oat porridge, Xu Yourong decided to sleep a little more. Chen Changsheng felt very bored and decided to continue strolling.

As the morning sun rose, the thin mists scattered. A vibration came from his wrist, after which he heard Luoluo's voice.

Chen Changsheng glanced once more at the increasingly visible outline of Xuelao City and then walked toward the mountain slope ten-some li away.

He stood in front of the carriage and said, "The time has come."

After a moment of silence, Shang Xingzhou ordered, "Enter the city."

Chapter 1163 – The Troubles Encountered When Entering the City

The tens of thousands of human soldiers began to advance toward Xuelao City. They walked silently, without much noise. Other than calm and composure, there was no emotion amongst their ranks.

They looked less like an army on the victory march and more like wanderers returning. It truly was a rather bizarre sight.

The great honor of being the first to enter Xuelao City was granted to Guan Feibai.

The Mount Li Sword Sect had played an extremely important role in this war, achieving all sorts of merits on the battlefield. At the same time, they had also suffered many casualties amongst their disciples.

Of course, this action was also very dangerous. Their might be an ambush waiting just behind the city gate, or wolf cavalry who had gone mad from bloodlust.

Wielding his sword, Guan Feibai walked past the city gate.

The city gate burned by the painting of the blazing Sangharama Temple now consisted of just the frame, which was even more tattered after the constant barrage of catapults and ballistae over the last few days.

Guan Feibai walked in.

Everything was done casually.

There was no sneak attack, no ambush, no battle.

He stood inside the empty city gate, his head tilted in surprise.

And then he turned around and waved at the plains to his rear.

The cheers soared straight into the sky.

Hooves thundered as the cavalry galloped into the city.

Flying carriages, under the protection of Red Falcons, slowly flew onto the city walls.

As they entered the city, many people, including Chen Changsheng, couldn't help but turn to the south.

How was the capital doing right now?

.....

.....

"I've never met such a thick-skinned and shameless person!"

The Prince of Luling gazed at the distant square-faced and dignified man, and resentfully said, "He even wants to rebel against his own nephew. Just what's going on in his head?"

The Prince of Cheng County followed his gaze and realized that he was looking at Tianhai Chenwu. Bitterly smiling, he replied, "That old fox is sharper than anyone. He would never choose the wrong side."

When the Prince of Xiang raised the flag of rebellion, no one expected the Tianhai clan, cautious and low-key throughout the last ten-some years, to be the first to answer the call.

Just like the Prince of Luling, many people could not understand this. After all, the blood of the Tianhai clan flowed through the emperor's body.

The Prince of Cheng County looked at the Prince of Luling's expression and realized that he still did not understand. He patiently explained, "Last year, His Majesty visited the Hundred Herb Garden three times."

The Prince of Luling blankly stared for a moment and then asked, "So what?"

The Prince of Cheng County whispered, "There's always been a rumor that His Holiness buried the Divine Empress's body in the

Hundred Herb Garden."

The Prince of Luling finally understood and took in a deep breath. "Is His Majesty really planning to reverse the verdict?"

The Prince of Cheng County shook his head. "His Majesty and the venerable Daoist have always had a deep relationship, so it won't go that far. But in the end, he and the Empress are still son and mother. No one can say anything if he goes to the Hundred Herb Garden to pay respects, but there is a concern that as his affection for the Empress deepens, that matter will become a problem."

The Tianhai Divine Empress had been deceased for ten-some years now, and Yuren had few memories regarding her, so there logically shouldn't have been much affection. But affection had always been that strangest of things. Just a few words from a passerby and a few sights might cause it to start flooding back.

It was very natural for the Emperor to feel some affection for the Tianhai Divine Empress. No one would worry, except for the Tianhai clan.

At the time, the entire world was rebelling against Tianhai. The emperor could put aside his hatred for Shang Xingzhou, put aside his hatred for the princes of the Chen clan and the ministers of the court, but he would still hate the Tianhai clan and Xu Shiji.

The old fox that was Tianhai Chenwu could naturally see that the more the Emperor's affection for the Tianhai Divine Empress deepened, the more he would hate the Tianhai clan, because they were traitors.

If one said that Xu Shiji could survive in the court through his relationship with Xu Yourong, where would the Tianhai clan go to seek shelter?

The Luo River in the early autumn was lined with green trees. The weather was clear and refreshing.

The army from the north and the experts raised by the Chen

princes and the Tianhai clan stood on the dikes of the river in two tight rows.

If there were several thousand crossbows being fired at once here, this rebellion would come to a comical and bloody end.

But let alone the capital, even all the provinces and counties added together would not be able to gather so many crossbowmen.

It was precisely for this reason that the rebellious army would so sloppily arrange itself and that those princes and rebelling generals were still in the mind to chat.

The rebel army did not surround the city, as the capital had no walls to besiege.

In these last few days of silent waiting, the vast majority of the common people had fled. The capital was presumably deserted with not a soul to be spied on the streets.

This didn't look at all like rebellion, but more like a spring outing. The rebel army seemed to be very relaxed, but certain details revealed that they were actually very nervous.

The inappropriate chatter was exactly proof of the tension.

If the Prince of Xiang did not win his bet, they would end dying without a place of burial.

At this moment, a Red Goose flew out of the sky.

The news from the front line had been sent to the capital.

The human armies had finally broken into Xuelao City.

Cheers broke out on the shores of the Luo River.

The princes and the rebellious soldiers all showed sincere smiles, though they quickly became awkward ones.

It now appeared that they did not need to worry about becoming the sinners of history or taking on an eternal infamy, but why did they feel like their faces had become even uglier?

"Your Highness, do you really not care about being scorned for the rest of time?"

In the carriage at the very front of the army, Cao Yunping rubbed his round face and gave the Prince of Xiang a beaming smile.

After stealthily returning from the front lines, the Prince of Xiang remained in Snowhold Pass for a time. He had clearly recovered from his heavy injuries, but he had clearly gotten much thinner.

"What about you?"

The Prince of Xiang indifferently glanced at Cao Yunping and said, "If the Elder of Heavenly Secrets were still alive, he would probably rip you apart."

Cao Yunping laughed and said, "I certainly don't care about eternal infamy, because I'm an imbecile."

The Prince of Xiang smiled and returned, "Good reason. Then count me as a madman."

After a while, his smile faded, and he gazed at the Imperial Palace looming in the distance and sighed. "In truth, it's just that I'm unwilling."

He had always believed that he was the best of Emperor Xian's sons, the most outstanding, the most filial to the Divine Empress.

In every aspect, he was a suitable emperor, and he had an even more outstanding son.

If he did not seize the chance now, when the demons were exterminated and the humans united the continent, Yuren would gain unprecedented prestige while he would lose all his hope.

It was just that simple.

Cao Yunping sighed, "I don't know if we'll be able to win this gamble."

The Prince of Xiang caressed the fat around his belt and said, "His

Majesty wants to reverse the verdict on Imperial Mother. How can the venerable Daoist tolerate this?"

Cao Yunping shook his head. "In the end, that's something that hasn't happened. How can that be hidden from his esteemed self?"

The Prince of Xiang added, "Even if that is the case, the venerable Daoist is still not guaranteed to support His Majesty. In truth, many people have not thought about the fact that his attitude toward His Majesty is more like a projection of Emperor Taizong. To put it another way, what he likes about His Majesty is the side of His Majesty that is like the side of Emperor Taizong that loved the people of the world, the wise sovereign. So why wouldn't he like me?"

Cao Yunping pointed at the Prince of Xiang's round belly and asked, "Does your body have any of Emperor Taizong's good points?"

The Prince of Xiang sternly said, "Of course. Is a daring and risk-taking villain like me, willing to go to extreme and shameless ends, not exactly like Emperor Taizong's other side?"

Cao Yunping held his belly and laughed, but it wasn't long before the laughter stopped.

He looked at the Prince of Xiang and said with all seriousness, "I suddenly feel like your words are very reasonable."

.....

.....

The rebel army met no resistance as they entered the capital. There truly were no pedestrians on the deserted streets, only the occasional stray cat warily poking its head out of a pile of trash.

The capital had an extremely small garrison. The Imperial Guards and the Orthodoxy cavalry, around three thousand in total, had already retreated into the Imperial Palace and the Li Palace. The soldiers and generals taking part in this rebellion were

naturally extremely loyal to the Prince of Xiang, so there were not too many of them. They only had thirteen thousand cavalry, and when fighting the Imperial Guard and the Orthodoxy cavalry, who had the geographic advantage, they would not have too much of an edge, and they certainly would not be able to control the entire capital.

The rebel army's true winning stratagem was that they had two Divine Domain experts on their side: the Prince of Xiang and Cao Yunping.

The majestic Imperial City was right in front of them, and the ginkgo trees beginning to shed their leaves early were extremely striking on the flat ground of New North Bridge.

The Prince of Xiang and Cao Yunping stood on the ground covered in yellow leaves, gazing at the Imperial Palace, caring not about the mighty divine crossbows stationed on the walls.

Sensing a powerful Qi within the Imperial Palace, Cao Yunping slightly frowned. "This is the Imperial Design."

The Prince of Xiang's brow also creased as he said, "The Lingyan Pavilion has already been destroyed and I'm sure the White Sun Flame was sent to Xuelao City. This is probably only a part of the Imperial Design."

Cao Yunping squinted his eyes, making his face look like a giant steamed bun with two cracks. "That's a little troublesome."

At this very moment, the rebel army reported on another piece of very troublesome news.

The Prince of Xiang's face turned rather nasty, but Cao Yunping began to laugh.

Chapter 1164 – The Prince of Zhongshan's Choice

Just like all the other streets of the capital, the Road of Peace was extremely deserted.

The experts of the Tianhai clan and the princely estates had left the city some time ago to meet up with the rebel army, and they were now all outside the Imperial Palace.

Yet it was at this moment that the Prince of Zhongshan chose to leave the rebel army and return to his estate on the Road of Peace.

The princes of the Chen clan with the greatest prestige in the military were the Prince of Xiang and the Prince of Zhongshan.

His departure left the rebel army stunned, even shaken.

Qin Chi was the chief strategist of the princely estate. He had not gone north with the army, instead secretly remaining in the capital to coordinate between the two sides.

Upon receiving the news, he hurried back to the princely estate. Upon seeing the prince sitting in the palace armchair, he looked like he had seen a ghost.

The Prince of Zhongshan had been recuperating from his wounds in Blue Pass this entire time, and it was only today that he arrived at the capital. After meeting with the Prince of Xiang in the rebel army and engaging in a short conversation, he went back to his own troops. No one had expected him to then enter the capital on his own, go back to his estate, take a bath, get some sleep, and then change into a soft and thin silken gown. At this very moment, he was eating a bowl of [zhajiangmian](#).

"My dear prince... What are you doing, Your Highness? Does Your Highness not know that we are in the middle of a rebellion? That we have started a revolt?"

Qin Chi had an incredulous look on his face. "Your Highness should either join the rebellion or hurry up and make a decision. How could you go home and take a nap? Is this bowl of noodles that tasty?"

The Prince of Zhongshan put down his bowl and impassively said, "Annoying. Just say what should be done!"

Qin Chi's eyes looked around as he whispered, "From the situation outside the Imperial City, it looks like the Prince of Xiang is very confident."

The Prince of Zhongshan sneered, "You think that my royal brother will make me emperor?"

Qin Chi froze for a second. "Presumably... not."

The Prince of Zhongshan continued, "This being the case, what difference will his success mean to me?"

Qin Chi bitterly smiled and replied, "The problem is, if Your Highness does not yield to the Prince of Xiang, after he succeeds, he will assuredly kill you."

The Prince of Zhongshan replied, "That makes sense. Since His Majesty won't kill me, it would still be better for me to support His Majesty."

Qin Chi was dumbstruck once more, wondering, where did these words come from?

Before he could continue his persuasions, the Prince of Zhongshan's hand clasped around his throat.

His Highness's fingers seem to be made of iron. I really shouldn't have advised him to put down that bowl of zhajiangmian.

These were the last two thoughts of Qin Chi's life.

Even after his throat was shattered, he still could not understand how the prince had known that he was privately communicating with the Prince of Xiang's estate, or why the prince was doing this.

Even after Qin Chi's corpse was dragged away, the Prince of Zhongshan still did not feel very happy. Untying his clothes, he began to fan himself.

A beautiful concubine walked in and, seeing the situation, immediately took up a small fan to assist him.

What the strategist found incomprehensible even in death, this concubine could see crystal-clear.

Even if the prince didn't know that his strategist was privately communicating with the Prince of Xiang's estate, he still wouldn't have listened to his opinions, because the prince had never once viewed the Prince of Xiang's venture with any optimism.

Not even the power of the rebel army could convince him, nor could the fact that Prince Chen Liu, in his ten years as a hostage, had actually succeeded in persuading so many ministers of the court, proving just how extraordinary an individual he was.

"I hear... that Prince Chen Liu persuaded many people in the palace."

The concubine hesitantly glanced at the Prince of Zhongshan.

The Prince of Zhongshan replied, "Even if the tongue can serve as a weapon, it's still not an actual weapon, so what use is it?"

The concubine sighed and filled the wine cup in front of him.

The Prince of Zhongshan looked out the window at the autumn sky, his hand gripping the little wine cup, his mood not as relaxed and leisurely as it seemed.

The rebel army had seized the capital, but it still needed some time to capture the Imperial Palace.

Where did the Prince of Xiang's confidence come from? Why did he care so little about Chen Changsheng?

The Prince of Zhongshan suddenly thought of the matter and smashed the wine cup on the table. "The North-Pacifying Army!"

.....

.....

From its name, one could tell that the North-Pacifying Army was the strongest of the demi-human armies.

The North-Pacifying Army had originally been intended to assist the human armies and attack the demons, but not long after leaving the Cong Province Army headquarters, it had stopped advancing north. It had instead elected to march in circles around the plains.

At the start, many people thought the demi-humans were going back on their word, but when those two divisions of the demi-human army suddenly appeared outside Xuelao City, these people then believed that the North-Pacifying Army had been acting as a distraction. However, the facts now showed that all these speculations were wrong, or maybe incomplete.

Before those two divisions of the demi-human army had finished passing through the mountains bordering the Elf grasslands, the North-Pacifying Army had already mobilized. The twenty thousand demi-human soldiers quickly marched through the western highlands of Cong Province. After being let through Snowhold Pass, they silently brushed past the left flank of Tianliang County and finally arrived at the perimeter of the capital.

Mount Mo had collapsed ten years ago, transforming into ten-some short hills with all sorts of wildflowers growing atop them.

After passing through these hills, many of the demi-human soldiers had a wildflower on their collars.

Many peasants on their path had already noticed this demi-human army. The common people of the Great Zhou Dynasty often saw demi-humans, but they rarely saw so many burly demi-human men. They were naturally rather uneasy, but the thought

of the human–demi-human alliance prevented them from shouting in panic.

The North-Pacifying Army was worthy of its reputation as the most elite troops of the Demi-human race. Demi-human soldiers were innately unruly, but even on this long march, the troops remained extremely disciplined. Even after they formally joined with the rebel army on the outskirts of the capital, they were still orderly, and there was none of the turmoil that many people had feared.

The addition of two thousand valiant demi-human warriors to the ranks of the rebellion led to a complete imbalance in the forces on the two sides. More importantly, the appearance of the North-Pacifying Army in the capital symbolized the White Emperor's stance. Only now did everyone realize that the White Emperor had allied himself with the Prince of Xiang for quite some time already.

After the northern expedition against the demons concluded, the experts of the Divine Domain would all probably need a very long period of rest and recuperation. Shang Xingzhou was old and Wang Zhice would not involve himself in worldly affairs. The Prince of Xiang, Cao Yunping, and the Saint that was the White Emperor truly had the sufficient qualifications to decide the structure of the entire continent.

The morale of the rebel army rose, but since the decisive battle against the demons was still taking place on the front lines, neither the princes nor the soldiers could truly feel bold and confident. Thus, even now, they did not use siege weaponry like catapults. However, if the stalemate continued, blood would inevitably flow.

The gates of the Imperial City were tightly shut, the rebel army and the defenders constantly exchanging curses. The rebel army was not using siege weapons, and it was perhaps for this very reason that the divine crossbows on the walls of the Imperial City had still not been fired. However, the obscene curses being slung through the air were no worse than swift crossbow bolts.

The tottering figure of Grand Tutor Bai Ying was assisted by several civil officials up the wall. As he looked at the rebel army below, he used a broadcasting artifact to give a tear-stricken speech. Seeing that the rebel army was unmoved, he began to feel anger rising from his belly. He began to directly call out the Prince of Xiang, his words mostly revolving around the phrase 'infamy throughout the ages'.

The rebel army parted like a tide as the Prince of Xiang rode a horse to the gates of the Imperial City. He said to Grand Tutor Bai Ying, "To die of no apparent illness after receiving the criticism of thousands is the conduct of a weakling, not me."

Grand Tutor Bai Ying despaired at these words. With his hand on his heart, he was helped down the wall by the attending officials.

Zhajiāngmian is a noodle dish consisting of buckwheat noodles topped with a fermented soybean paste.

Chapter 1165 – The Returned Prince Chen Liu and Him

Mo Yu appeared on the walls of the Imperial City. Her appearance was still as beautiful as a painting, though it was one tinged with exhaustion.

The Prince of Louyang nervously stood next to her, deeply concerned that some cold arrow would fly out of nowhere.

Mo Yu declared, "Since Your Highness has already resolved yourself, I can presume that not even Prince Chen Liu's life can threaten you."

Though she said that it couldn't threaten him, she was still actually threatening him.

Many eyes in the rebel army looked to the Prince of Xiang.

The Prince of Xiang's eyes teared up as he said, "My son will certainly die without regrets. When this is over, I will posthumously confer upon him the title of Crown Prince."

In deep admiration, Mo Yu said no more.

.....

.....

Prince Chen Liu's face was rather pale. Perhaps it was because the weather today was rather gloomy, or perhaps it was because he had not seen the sun for a very long time.

He turned to an elderly eunuch and said, "I do not know when I will be able to repay your kindness in saving my life."

It was for good reason that the Prince of Zhongshan's beautiful concubine had been worried. Prince Chen Liu lived up to his reputation as the offspring of the Imperial clan most similar to Emperor Taizong. He possessed an unimaginable charisma, so that

even though he had been under house arrest for ten years, not only did he fail to become depressed, he succeeded in gaining many supporters.

This old eunuch was the most important of them.

This was the laundry department, the most disorderly and inconspicuous place on the eastern face of the Imperial City.

No one could have expected that the prince that should have been under heavy guard in the Weiyang Palace was already outside the Imperial City.

The old eunuch sighed. Without saying anything, he turned and walked back into the Imperial City.

Prince Chen Liu gazed up at the gloomy sky.

He did not continue to ponder what the old eunuch's sigh meant, because such thoughts were meaningless.

His eyes were even calmer than before, and only in the very depths could one spy a very faint fatigue.

.....

.....

The Imperial City was already surrounded by the rebel army while the demi-human North-Pacifying Army was in charge of the southeastern district, the area in which the Orthodox Academy and the Hundred Herb Garden were located.

The Orthodox Academy was under such tight guard that even a drop of water would find it difficult to get through. Not even during the coup of the Mausoleum of Books had it been so heavily guarded. The teachers and students who had chosen to remain in the school were extremely nervous and didn't know what to do. As a result, no one noticed a seemingly rather thin student traverse the thick forest by the lake to reach the walls of the Imperial City.

This was a forbidden area of the Orthodox Academy, and the

door leading to the Imperial City had both a powerful array and a difficult lock protecting it.

The thin student seemed to not care for these rules, and they easily broke through the array. There was also a key in their sleeve that let them open that old and rusted lock.

She was no ordinary student. She was very familiar with both the Imperial Palace and the Orthodox Academy. To be more precise, she was the Vice Principal of the Orthodox Academy.

While Prince Chen Liu was making his escape from the Imperial Palace, Luoluo was sneaking her way in.

She was offering the greetings of the Orthodox Academy to the emperor and also introducing a new variable.

The White Emperor had sent the North-Pacifying Army to show his support for the Prince of Xiang.

But if she was in the Imperial Palace, would the North-Pacifying Army dare to attack? More importantly, was there a chance that the North-Pacifying Army would heed her orders and change sides?

No one knew how the situation would develop, because at this point, the rebel army did not know that Luoluo had entered the Imperial Palace.

But Prince Chen Liu felt an ill omen.

The winds from the west were too wet, or the water in the well was too sweet. There were always some inexplicable details that would make people begin to draw connections.

Right after escaping the Imperial Palace, he spoke briefly with his father before bringing up his incredibly determined demand.

Regardless of whether the Imperial Design could be opened, the rebel army should still begin to attack the Imperial City so as to place a greater pressure on the defenders.

"The Imperial Design can only block experts like Father and Uncle Cao, but it cannot block ordinary soldiers. Moreover, there are many other places in the capital that need to be seized."

The Prince of Xiang found it hard to reject Prince Chen Liu's proposal in the face of that wan complexion and those gloomy eyes.

Battles would naturally occur between the seized and seizers, and blood would flow. When the situation turned even more chaotic, houses might even be set on fire.

With Prince Chen Liu's return, the rebel army's movements became more intense. By the evening of the same day, fires could be seen all over the capital.

The self-control that both sides had maintained for so many days gradually began to slip, and scenes of burning, killing, and looting began popping up all over the streets around the Imperial Palace and the Li Palace.

In Prince Chen Liu's view, these were all costs that had to be endured to ensure success, so he didn't need to worry about them.

He was more concerned about other things.

He led three hundred cavalry of the rebel army to the Orthodox Academy.

"A temple of Xining rules the world."

As he gazed at the gate of the Orthodox Academy, Prince Chen Liu said these words.

This phrase had been circulating the continent for ten-some years and was on the verge of becoming a truth, a belief amongst the common people.

In order to destroy this phrase, he first had to destroy the Orthodox Academy.

But he was truly very familiar with this gate.

Many years ago, in a bout of autumn rain, Tianhai Shengxue returned from the north and brought his clan's soldiers to ram the gate of the Orthodox Academy into pieces.

Jin Yulu moved, defeating Divine General Fei Dian, and then after that was the Ivy Festival. After that incident, the Orthodox Academy made no attempts to repair the gate, using its ruins to deliver a slap to the Tianhai clan's face.

It was only during the Grand Examination that Tianhai Shengxue finally conceded. He personally led the effort to repair the gate, and another story was born in the capital.

That period of time was also the start of Prince Chen Liu's close relationship with the Orthodox Academy. During the repairs to the gate, he had personally seen the designs and given his opinions.

In other words, he had also made some contributions to the current gate.

At that time, all the ivy in front of the gate had been torn away and the smooth stones had been completely exposed.

Now, the ivy had regrown, obscuring the majority of the words.

"Smash it."

Prince Chen Liu calmly spoke these two words.

The rebel soldiers carried the prepared battering ram and, under the eyes of the confused demi-human soldiers, they viciously slammed it against the gate.

After several thunderous booms, the gate of the Orthodox Academy cracked and then slowly toppled to the sides.

As the night set in, the soldiers of the rebel and demi-human armies lit torches.

The torches illuminated the depths of Hundred Flowers Lane, the shattered remnants of the academy gate, and many young faces.

Those faces were all very young, and they were clearly very

nervous. Fear was starkly visible in their eyes.

But not a single person had left, because they were the teachers and students of the Orthodox Academy.

Prince Chen Liu was rather surprised.

It was not because of this sight, but because at the very front of these teachers and students was Tianhai Shengxue.

The fires clearly illuminated Tianhai Shengxue's face.

Prince Chen Liu felt like the workings of the world were truly wondrous. He began to laugh rather bitterly.

.....

.....

It was a gloomy day in Xuelao City. The clouds were extremely thick, tightly blocking out the sun.

The streets of the city were so dark that it seemed like it was still before dawn. One could occasionally hear a dog bark, as well as the sounds of pursuit and fighting.

The demon soldiers were still resisting. They clearly lacked any sort of organization, but they were still very troublesome to the human army.

The cavalry galloped along the wide and straight boulevards while signal fireworks occasionally lit up the sky. Finally, at dusk, the intense battle began to die down and then cease.

Xuelao City was very large, and it was necessary to clear the blockades and deal with the occasional ambush from a demon expert, so the soldiers could not advance too quickly. There was also one other important reason that the holy carriage in which Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong sat did not arrive at the forest of buildings that was the Imperial City until dusk. There were still very far from the Demon Palace itself.

A blooming flower of fire blazed at the very front of the convoy,

spitting out rays of white light and driving away the deepening darkness. Someone very close would have been able to see that this torch was not made of gold or jade, but an extremely transparent glass. While it had a milky white surface, countless crystals were glimmering within, all of them seemingly containing infinite energy.

This was a divine artifact of the Demon race: the White Sun Flame.

In the war from several hundred years ago, Emperor Taizong and his generals seized this divine artifact on the battlefield and brought it back to the capital, placing it in the Lingyan Pavilion for safekeeping.

Today, the human army had brought it back to Xuelao City, but it did not feel like it was returning home. Instead, it was like some powerful will passing on its legacy.

The demon commoners who had been driven from their homes into the streets and the impoverished demons standing in front of their shabby homes curiously gazed at the human troops advancing to the Demon Palace.

When they saw those flames of white jade, they began to whisper to each other. Gradually and mysteriously, they began to kneel.

If you have any questions, feel free to ping me on Discord or message me on Twitter.

Chapter 1166 – I'll Stop Here

Other than the legendary White Sun Flame, the demon commoners were also focused on the holy carriage and that other small carriage.

Even as the losers, when they thought about how that holy carriage contained the Pope and Holy Maiden of the Human race, they couldn't help but be curious and excited. Chen Changsheng was very famous in the demon realm, and Xu Yourong was even more famous, as the Demon Lord had once passionately confessed his love for her. But who was in the small carriage? These commoners were perplexed, surprised that there was a human who could rank above the Pope and Holy Maiden. As their speculations began to spread, the commoners finally learned that this was the teacher of the Human race's Emperor and Pope. He was called Shang Xingzhou, and he was apparently an individual equally as famous as Wang Zhice.

Shang Xingzhou paid no attention to the curious gazes from the streets. His gaze, also brimming with curiosity, was focused on the buildings lining the streets.

He had come to Xuelao City before and read countless documents concerning it, but this was his first time actually entering the city.

To him, this capital of the Demon race was both strange and familiar, packed with an intoxicating and unreal sensation.

Just like these buildings, it was truly both gorgeous and yet unreasonable.

Just what did those steep spires soaring into the clouds symbolize?

Why was it that those windows embedded with glass as blue as the ocean, clearly capable of welcoming the most dazzling of sunlight, seemed so sinister, like they were entrances to the

Netherworld?

The most magnificent of the buildings appeared before everyone's eyes. Even in the dark and starless night, it loomed before them like a high mountain.

This was the Demon Palace.

The front gate to the Demon Palace, ten-some zhang high, had already been broken open. Its edges were fringed by blue flames, most likely related to the material that it was constructed from.

The small carriage stopped outside the Demon Palace. It did not enter, so the entire convoy stopped.

Time slowly passed. The small carriage did not move, and no sound came from within.

Countless gazes stared at the small carriage.

The Tang Old Master walked to the small carriage.

Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong also walked up.

Through the blue carriage curtain, the Tang Old Master asked, "Do you want to go in?"

The curtain was raised, revealing Shang Xingzhou's face.

He asked, "Is that about it?"

The Tang Old Master turned to Chen Changsheng.

After a short pause, Chen Changsheng nodded.

They had entered the city in the morning, but they had only reached the Demon Palace at this late hour. The most important reason for this was that Chen Changsheng had ordered the convoy to make a circuit of Xuelao City, demanding that it pass through all the famous streets and neighborhoods to see all the famous buildings.

"That's about it."

The Tang Old Master said.

"Then I'll stop looking here."

Shang Xingzhou gave a satisfied sigh and closed his eyes.

It was utterly silent in front of the Demon Palace. The sounds of battle in the distance and the fireworks in the sky could be clearly heard and seen.

After some time, the Tang Old Master stepped forward and put down the curtain.

Chen Changsheng walked to the carriage and hugged the young Daoist boy.

The boy knew who he was and was not afraid. He tightly hugged back.

Chen Changsheng noticed that the boy's sleeves were tied very tightly and there were a few bloodstains on his face. He knew that these were left over from all the soldiers he had treated in these last few days.

"You have an uncle whose sleeves are cut very short. It's very convenient that way, and in the future, I'll cut them for you."

The boy nodded. "Okay."

Xu Yourong stepped forward and took the boy from Chen Changsheng's embrace.

The young Daoist boy had never met Xu Yourong, but he was still very obedient.

Chen Changsheng walked into the Demon Palace.

Xu Yourong hugged the young Daoist boy and followed behind him.

The boy looked back at the carriage and finally could no longer hold back his tears. "Is Ancestor dead?"

Chen Changsheng did not speak, did not turn his head.

The Tang Old Master went after them, his two hands held behind

him.

Wang Po came, intending to drag the carriage into the Demon Palace.

"Let me do it."

Xiao Zhang took on this task.

Everyone knew that Chen Changsheng was the most suitable candidate for this task, but everyone also knew why he was not willing to stop.

.....

.....

The sounds of fighting within the Demon Palace gradually stopped. A few fires started amongst the halls, but they were quickly extinguished. Even though this was an occupation, everything was done neatly and methodically.

Just like Chen Changsheng's footsteps, it was carried out with a steady and clear tempo, not fast and not slow.

But he was not able to clearly make out the appearance of those palaces.

These palaces were constructed from extremely rare black-veined stone, and all of them gave off an imposing vastness. Moreover, different palaces had different styles, different colors. The painting techniques of Xuelao City used upon these buildings truly had an astonishing effect, imbuing the halls with a garish beauty.

But in his eyes, these were all blurry patches of color.

A field of sunflowers had been planted deep within the Demon Palace. So vast was the area it occupied that it looked like a sea of yellow. Even on this cold autumn night, it still gave off a feeling of incredible warmth.

A party of people walked through the sunflower sea, and as they ventured deep, they felt their surroundings turn colder, and some

sort of evil and sinister energy, like darkness itself, seemed to be strengthening.

The Daoist Canon had records that said that this energy was the Qi of the abyss, one of the sources of the Demon race's strength.

The Demon Hall was built right on the edge of the abyss. It seemed like it wasn't far now.

The yellow sunflowers parted like a tide as a pitch-black palace of massive size appeared before them.

The party entered the Demon Hall through a flight of stone steps that extended for several li.

Chen Changsheng's gaze was no longer blurry, though his eyes were still a little red.

The Demon Hall encompassed a massive space, but there was not a single stone pillar supporting it. It was made completely of massive black stone, and paintings were placed at set intervals. They depicted people, landscapes, flowers, and even simple intersecting lines that seemed to conceal all sorts of wisdom.

The party had not encountered a single demon on their journey from the main gate to the Demon Hall. There were no demons in the Demon Hall either, and the place was abnormally cold and cheerless.

A dark green light suddenly appeared and stabbed toward Chen Changsheng's brow.

Even from a distance, the crowd could sense the toxin on this light.

Chen Changsheng was very familiar with this green light. It was Nanke's Peacock Plume.

Xu Yourong said something to the young Daoist boy in her bosom, but she did not raise her head.

A dagger flew through the air, accurately stabbing through the

green light.

Just when Chen Changsheng was prepared to receive Nanke's next bizarre attack, the green light suddenly vanished.

Several collisions rang out in the upper reaches of the Demon Hall, and then snowflakes began to drift down.

Two figures crashed to the ground in a massive boom. Even this firm black stone sustained several cracks.

The scattering dust revealed a black-clothed girl holding down Nanke.

"How did you get so weak?"

The black-clothed girl asked Nanke in confusion.

Chen Changsheng gazed at Nanke's pale face in surprise. He could only imagine what she had endured upon her return to Xuelao City.

"I truly regret that I didn't kill you in the Garden of Zhou the moment I saw you."

Nanke ignored the black-clothed girl. She stared at Chen Changsheng's face with an expression of infinite loathing.

Chen Changsheng was quiet for a while, but he chose to say nothing and proceeded deeper into the Demon Hall.

Nanke gazed at his back and shouted in despair, "Will you only be happy once we're all dead?"

"No, I only need you to surrender."

Chen Changsheng turned and silently contemplated the small carriage for a while, then repeated, "Surrender."

Chapter 1167 – Who Are You?

The black-clothed girl shook her head and released Nanke before walking to Chen Changsheng's side.

There were quite a few experts of the Divine Domain in this party. Even though they were all rather injured, they could still fight. In Nanke's current state, she was no threat to them.

Nanke's face paled even further. She weakly got up from the floor and followed.

No one even glanced at her, but there were people very curious about the black-clothed girl.

The chilly wind assailing them and the thin sheet of frost she left in her wake had already caused many people to guess who she was.

It turned out that she had not been in the warm isles of the Southern Sea. She had been here this whole time. As expected, she was still the Pope's Protector.

Chen Changsheng had guessed long ago that she was amongst the army.

In the second phase of the campaign, in that crucial moment when the North Third Camp was about to fall under assault from several thousand vultures armed with explosives, those vultures mysteriously dropped down from the sky and burned themselves to death on the plains. Many people did not understand how this could be, but he knew that this was the pressure she exuded as a high-class divine being at work.

In the rest of the war, Zhizhi had played crucial roles several times, especially in that incident a few days ago.

When all the demons in Xuelao City were serving as a distraction, Gao Huan led a thousand-some wolf cavalry out of Nuorilang and against a human supply convoy. The Tang Old Master ended up killing this raiding party, but many of the supply wagons had still

been set ablaze. Before his death, Gao Huan saw the flames on those supply wagons being put out, leaving him so perplexed that he had found it hard to die at peace. This had also been her handiwork. That strange fire that even water and sand found hard to put out was a trifle for a Black Frost Dragon.

Chen Changsheng asked, "You're not angry?"

Zhizhi said very matter-of-factly, "You're not willing to marry me, so of course I'm angry."

Chen Changsheng asked, "Then why did you still come and help me?"

Zhizhi replied, "If the Human race loses, then you'll definitely die. Who will I marry then?"

This truly was a problem.

Chen Changsheng found it impossible to answer.

Xu Yourong suddenly asked, "Do you know why you've never been able to mature?"

Zhizhi was somewhat perplexed as she asked herself, why is that?

Xu Yourong explained, "It's not because the array beneath New North Bridge harmed your intelligence, but because you always want to mate with humans, interfering with your cultivation."

Zhizhi was enraged, but she couldn't find any words to retort. With a red face, she shouted, "Are you saying that you don't think about it?"

The young Daoist boy looked up from Xu Yourong's bosom and curiously wondered what they were arguing about.

Xu Yourong wagged a finger, the meaning of which was both clear and yet somewhat vague.

That they chose this time to quarrel like children actually had a very simple reason: they were both rather nervous.

The group had already walked into the deepest part of the Demon Hall. They had seen the black demon flames and sensed the Qi of the abyss behind those flames.

The black demon flames were like ever-fluctuating darkness: not at all serene, containing a boundless energy, and extremely terrifying.

A young man stood in front of the demon flames. He was dressed in a long, white gown, and his hair hung loose. He was like a poet who had lost his homeland, or an anguished singer.

The group was nervous not because they were afraid, but because history was about to take place right in front of their eyes.

The Demon Lord turned around. As he used his fingers to casually tidy his hair, he asked Chen Changsheng, "The one thing I don't understand is that the Prince of Xiang and Cao Yunping are in the capital right now, and even the White Emperor might have gone, because his esteemed self does not want me to die, so why do you care so little?"

His gaze fell on that small carriage. Upon realizing that there was no breathing from inside, he said with a rather complicated expression, "Even if your student has such a one-track mind, how can you not care?"

.....

.....

Rain began to fall over the capital.

The raindrops passed through the light of the torches and slapped against the ivy growing on the Orthodox Academy's walls.

Prince Chen Liu stared at Tianhai Shengxue, the smile on his lips slowly fading.

In these last ten years, the emperor had not treated the Tianhai clan in any special manner, but he treated Tianhai Shengxue

rather decently. Two years ago, he had even appointed him to a vital post in the Ministry of the Army.

In the early spring, Tianhai Shengxue was stricken by a severe illness that left him unable to join the army on the front lines.

At the end of summer, he began to secretly communicate with Mo Yu, and the palace managed to invite several bishops of the Li Palace who gradually succeeded in curing his illness. He could no longer bother to think about all the darkness and filth concealed behind this incident, but the familiar faces amongst the rebel army still made his stomach throb in pain.

"Grandaunt called all of you a pile of trash, and it looks to me that she was right."

Tianhai Shengxue gazed at his cousins and jeered, "It turns out that not one of you has any guts."

Tianhai Chenwu rode a horse out of the crowd and regarded his son's face. "Do you know what you're doing?"

Tianhai Shengxue asked, "Father, do you know what you're doing? The humans are fighting a war with the demons, and you're starting a rebellion! Have you no shame?"

As his voice spread through the autumn rain, the rebel army became rather discomfited.

Hundred Flowers Lane was quiet and the pattering of raindrops on the ivy was rather vexing.

Prince Chen Liu wiped away the rain on his face. He looked down from his horse at Tianhai Shengxue, his visage indifferent.

"I only know that I will soon be a future emperor, and who are you?"

After saying this, he raised his right hand, preparing to order the cavalry to charge.

Many years ago, in a similar autumn rain, Tianhai Shengxue had

done just the same.

Tianhai Shengxue's face was rather pale. He knew that it was impossible to stop so many soldiers by himself.

Su Moyu, Chen Fugui, Chu Wenbin and the other experts of the Orthodox Academy were all on the front lines, and Zhexiu and Tang Thirty-Six were certainly not here.

How many teachers and students were about to lie fallen in pools of blood? Would the Orthodox Academy be transformed into a ruin?

Without any warning, Prince Chen Liu's right hand dropped down like an axe chopping down a tree: straightforward and with force.

A mystical sight took place.

An extremely thick scholar tree suddenly split at the trunk.

Boom!

The felled scholar tree crashed toward Prince Chen Liu.

With a plaintive whine, the warhorse was crushed to death. Prince Chen Liu landed in the rain, his body covered in blood.

The entire world was silent.

The crowd gazed at that stalwart figure in the rain, so shocked that they couldn't speak.

Just who was this stalwart figure that they could grasp the trunk of a massive tree with one arm and wield it as a weapon? And they had been able to easily knock Prince Chen Liu to the ground.

Prince Chen Liu was a true expert of the upper level of Star Condensation. Even if this was an ambush, how had he not even been able to counterattack?

And Tianhai Chenwu, who had an unfathomable cultivation, had been at Prince Chen Liu's side. Why had he not reacted?

The autumn rain intensified, falling on the leaves of the snapped tree and dripping to the ground.

Tianhai Chenwu snorted and sent his right palm cutting through the rain.

Prince Chen Liu had been ambushed and injured right in front of him, which he would find very difficult to explain to the Prince of Xiang. Moreover, he had been astonished at this assailant's methods. Thus, he naturally used all his strength, holding nothing back.

His palm was edged with crystalline starlight. Like an actual weapon, it screeched as it cleaved through the rain and air.

The stalwart figure did not seem intent on retreating. They raised their right hand to meet the palm.

Crack! A bolt of lightning pierced through the dark sky, landing right in front of the gate of the Orthodox Academy and transforming into countless arcs of electricity that writhed around his coarse arm.

The Heavenly Thunder Bringer!

The moment that fist and palm met, all the rain in the sky seemed to stop in the air.

Tianhai Chenwu retreated several dozen zhang, only stopping after crashing through a restaurant. Blood flowed from the corner of his lips.

The stalwart man stood at his original spot, his expression unchanged.

Many people now noticed that he hadn't even let go of the tree hugged by his left hand!

Just who was this stalwart man? Could he already be half a step into the Divine?

Although he had a heavy beard, his facial features indicated that

he was very young, but how could that be possible?

Prince Chen Liu stared at the stalwart man's face and found it rather familiar, but he couldn't remember from where. He asked, "Who are you?"

The stalwart man replied, "I'm Xuanyuan Po of the Orthodox Academy, and who are you?"

Chapter 1168 – Suddenly Turning My Head, I Find That Person Standing Under the Dim Light

Xuanyuan Po loosened his hand.

The heavy tree thumped to the ground, sending water flying.

Hundred Flowers Lane fell silent.

The rebel soldiers stared in shock at the stalwart figure before them.

The hint of a smile could be seen in Tianhai Shengxue's eyes, as well as a tinge of sorrow. The teachers and students of the Orthodox Academy behind him, however, had nothing but admiration and respect on their faces.

Xuanyuan Po was extremely famous, mostly because his story had a legendary characteristic to it. In the view of many people, it was second only to Pope Chen Changsheng's.

Ten-some years ago, he was a young demi-human genius which Star Seizer Academy had highly valued, but because Tianhai Ya'er crippled his right arm, he elected to withdraw from the academy despite the attempts to dissuade him. While making a living off washing dishes in the night market of the capital, he ended up being taken to the Orthodox Academy by Chen Changsheng and Luoluo. He had come even earlier than Tang Thirty-Six and become the beginning of the Orthodox Academy's revival.

Several years later, in the coup of the Mausoleum of Books, both Chen Changsheng and the Orthodox Academy were beset by storms. Xuanyuan Po returned to White Emperor City to seek aid, but his efforts were fruitless. He chose to work in a small tavern in one of White Emperor City's lower city districts. Many people mistook this as cowardice, and he suffered from countless glares

and jeers, but he never once argued.

It was only during the Heavenly Selection ceremony, when Madam Mu attempted to marry Luoluo off to the Demon Lord, that Xuanyuan Po finally stepped onto the fighting platform using his identity as a student of the Orthodox Academy. Starting from the most remote fighting platform in the lower city, he began to win match after match, ultimately winning nine in a row. He managed to reach the final round, and though he lost to the Demon Lord at the end, his performance still shocked the two shores of the Red River, as well as the rest of the continent.

Ten years had passed since then, and this member of the Orthodox Academy family was now a renowned general of the Demi-human race. In terms of pure fighting power, he was even the strongest of them. The Heavenly Thunder Bringer that Chen Changsheng had taught him and the fist style that Bie Yanghong had passed onto him working together resulted in an edge that not even Zhexiu was willing to confront head-on!

.....

.....

Everyone believed Xuanyuan Po was outside Xuelao City, leading the demi-human armies against the demon soldiers in a life-or-death struggle. No one had expected him to appear in the Orthodox Academy, but just a moment's thought would lead one to guess that he had probably concealed himself in the North-Pacifying Army and stealthily entered the capital.

Prince Chen Liu thought of a certain possibility, causing his complexion to further pale, and he seemed about to warn the rebel troops on the perimeter.

A sword glow illuminated the autumn rain, hacking at Prince Chen Liu.

This sword glow was rather unique. It was not the normal snow-

white, it lacked any sense of sharpness, and it certainly wasn't cold. On the contrary, it had an aura of summer heat.

Prince Chen Liu's sleeve flew as he drew a flexible sword. He barely managed to block the sword glow, but his body was sent flying backward. Upon smashing through a stone wall, he fell unconscious.

Xuanyuan Po's right arm had regained its original appearance a long time ago. He held a thick and heavy sword in his hand: the Mountain Sea Sword.

Prince Chen Liu had once been a frequent guest to the Orthodox Academy, so Xuanyuan Po naturally recognized him. He had probably asked him who he was purely out of anger.

You actually dare to destroy the Orthodox Academy!

"Anyone who dares to take one step into the Orthodox Academy will be killed without exception!"

Tianhai Chenwu walked out of the ruined restaurant, the front of his clothes speckled with blood.

He had originally intended to save Prince Chen Liu, but when he saw the Mountain Sea Sword in Xuanyuan Po's hand, he immediately changed his mind and led the offspring of the Tianhai clan in a retreat from the lane.

Right when they were about to retreat out of Hundred Flowers Lane, Tianhai Chenwu couldn't help but turn his head to take one last glance at the gate of the Orthodox Academy.

The light of the torches and the sheets of rain made Tianhai Shengxue's figure somewhat indistinct.

Tianhai Chenwu mentally sighed.

He had taken himself to be a flawless schemer, vicious and ruthless, [someone who pushed the words 'thick' and 'black' to the limit](#), who did not care about being called a vile opportunist. Thus,

the Tianhai clan would inevitably continue to survive through the dangerous political climates, and if he encountered any opportunities, the Tianhai clan might even welcome a second golden age.

But in the end, he had thoroughly lost. On the other hand, that arrogant son had done nothing except act according to his nature, yet he always ended up standing on the victorious side. Were his aunt's words to him back then true? Were all meticulously-made plans wrong? But why?

.....

.....

The North-Pacifying Army began to battle with the rebel army outside the Orthodox Academy. It was a long time before the sounds of fighting beneath the overcast sky finally came to a stop.

This place was rather close to the Imperial Palace, only separated by one Orthodox Academy, one Hundred Herb Garden. But perhaps because the forests were too lush, or maybe due to the array, the Imperial Palace did not hear too much of the fighting, only faint shouts.

The Imperial Palace in the darkness was cold and deserted. If one looked down from the Dew Platform, they would not be able to see a single person.

Only through careful observation would one discover that many maids and eunuch were hiding in the attics, the shrubs by the pools, and in remote corner rooms.

These maids and eunuchs all had pale complexions, and their bodies trembled in fear.

Yet they were not hiding here instead of defending the emperor in the main hall because they were afraid, but because they had been ordered to hide by their superiors.

There were many Night Pearls in the main hall of the Imperial

Palace. Though fewer than the number on the Dew Platform and the Night Pearls studding the cave beneath New North Bridge, they were sufficient to light up the hall like it was daytime.

The curtains swayed, causing the light of the Night Pearls to scatter like snowflakes. Alas, no one was in the mood to appreciate this sight.

The ministers, led by Grand Tutor Bai Ying, gazed at that figure standing at the entrance, their faces filled with shock and fury.

"One should rule the world with benevolence and righteousness, and the court is also a part of the world. Those adopted sons of mine have understood my thoughts and had those pitiful children hide so as to avoid any harm from the soldiers tonight. This can also be considered a benevolent and righteous act. If Your Majesty's mother had been able to understand this reasoning, what need would there have been to bury her in the Hundred Herb Garden and not with Emperor Xian?"

Eunuch Lin's gaze traveled across the faces of Grand Tutor Bai Ying, the ministers, and the guards, ultimately resting on the highest place.

Mo Yu and the Prince of Louyang stood there, guarding the person behind them. A faint smear of bright yellow was faintly visible.

"There might be some problems outside the palace, but they are not important, because this is the most important place in all of the Great Zhou. And I have lived in the Imperial Palace for far too long, longer than all of you added together... It is not at all challenging for me to stop the Imperial Design. I hope that Your Majesty can understand."

Who could have expected that Eunuch Lin, famed throughout for the continent for his loyalty to his sovereign and his virtue, had become the inside agent for the rebel army and helped the Prince of Xiang break the Imperial Design!

Grand Tutor Bai Ying took two tottering steps forward and said to Eunuch Lin, "Lin, my old friend, I've worked with you for more than two hundred years and am well aware of who you are. That you still remember those lowly eunuchs and maids at this time shows that your reputation is not false, so why are you carrying out this treasonous action?"

Eunuch Lin replied, "How can the actions of a true man be weighed down by reputation?"

He was a eunuch, yet he had always considered himself a true man. Moreover, no one in the world dared to question him, and even now, it was still very difficult to doubt him.

Grand Tutor Bai Ying asked in a grief-stricken voice, "Do you intend to wipe away your reputation as a loyal minister?"

"I am still a loyal minister, but I am loyal to Emperor Xian."

Eunuch Lin gazed at that figure seated at the highest point, concealed behind his guards, and said, "Your Majesty, I also deeply respect you, even found myself liking you more and more. Alas, you are still the son of that woman, so the more I respect you, the less I respect myself. The more I like you, the less I like myself. So please forgive this old minister for today's offense."

These words were rather difficult to understand. Only Mo Yu understood them, because she was a woman, and she let out a scornful laugh.

Eunuch Lin ignored her laughter and took a step forward.

The guards nervously began to unsheathe their blades.

The Prince of Louyang, his face pale and brow dripping with sweat, constantly muttered, "What do I do? What do I do?"

But he still did not put his hands down. He was abnormally determined, protecting that person behind him like an old mother hen protecting its chick.

Mo Yu was somewhat annoyed at his muttering, but her heart went soft when she saw how nervous he was. She softly said, "When things get messy, take His Majesty and escape."

The Prince of Louyang froze, then turned to her and asked, "To that place you mentioned that night?"

Mo Yu replied, "Goodness, you're stupid. I had you memorize it twenty times. Do you still not remember?"

The Prince of Louyang suddenly began to cry. "I did memorize it, but I don't want to leave you here."

The Imperial Design had been broken, and the two Divine Domain experts that were the Prince of Xiang and Cao Yunping could appear at any time. The emperor had to leave beforehand through the secret tunnel.

Mo Yu needed to remain to stop Eunuch Lin as well as attract the attention of others. How she would end up could be easily imagined.

Mo Yu and the Prince of Louyang were conversing in a rather soft tone. Besides them, only that person behind them could hear it.

Yet at this moment, an assessment of their conversation suddenly came from outside the hall.

"True love can only exist because it is true, because it is sincere, without the slightest artifice or falsehood. You truly are a student personally taught by Imperial Mother. Grand Lady Mo, I truly admire you."

The Prince of Xiang walked into the hall.

He said with nostalgia, "Back then, when I thought about you growing up together with Little Liu, I wrote a letter to Imperial Mother requesting for the two of you to be engaged. Alas, Imperial Mother did not agree."

Cao Yunping appeared behind him, his hands behind him as he

looked around the hall, occasionally saying 'not bad'. He was like some old retired official from the Ministry of Revenue admiring the sweet potato fields.

The Prince of Xiang no longer reminisced on the past. "Eunuch Lin is correct. Even if we completely lose on the outside, what does it matter? It's fine as long as we win here. As long as I can sit on that chair, even Mount Li or the Li Palace will all have to respect me, so what do I have to worry about?"

Mo Yu replied, "Your Highness, to sit firmly on this chair has never been a simple task."

"Have none of you noticed how thin I've gotten in the last ten years?"

The Prince of Xiang's hands rested on his waist, kneading the fat bulging from his belt as he bitterly smiled.

His smile faded as he turned his gaze to that highest seat. "I have no regrets about my gradually loosening belt. Your Majesty... brother, why not let me sit on that chair?"

.....

.....

"In..... truth..... I..... never..... wanted... to... sit... on this chair."

A voice echoed through the quiet hall.

The first two words were spoken with great difficulty, like the speaker was a baby just learning to speak.

In the following words, the speaker's pronunciation greatly improved. Though certainly not smooth or coherent, the words no longer sounded strange, just extremely slow and punctuated by pauses.

The reason for this was that this person had not spoken for many, many years.

This is a line from the poem '青玉案·元夕' by the Southern Song Dynasty poet Xin Qiji.

'Thick' and 'black' refer to a philosophical treatise published by Li Zongwu in 1911. 'Thick' here refers to a thick face, meaning shamelessness. 'Black' refers to a black heart, meaning ruthlessness.

Chapter 1169 – A Bright and Sunny Day

Mo Yu, the Prince of Louyang, Grand Tutor Bai Ying, and all the ministers and guards immediately turned their heads.

The faces of the Prince of Xiang and Eunuch Lin instantly changed, and even Cao Yunping showed an expression of surprise and bewilderment.

No one noticed that a delicate little eunuch on the second platform also looked over.

The Prince of Louyang lowered his arms in a daze.

That smear of bright yellow was fully revealed.

Emperor Yuren of the Great Zhou.

"Your Majesty!"

Several people shouted.

Yuren calmly regarded Eunuch Lin below.

Eunuch Lin suddenly felt a little hot, not in his body, but on his face. Why?

"It was We who decreed for the eunuchs and maids to hide, not your adopted son."

Yuren's expression was gentle and calm, and his pronunciation continued to improve. "Blades and spears have no eyes, and the great matters of state have nothing to do with them. What need is there for them to be injured or die for this cause?"

Eunuch Lin was quiet for a moment, and then he said, "Your Majesty is truly a benevolent sovereign."

Yuren replied, "Teacher and you both wanted me to be a benevolent sovereign, but if We were to abdicate because rebels and traitors threatened the lives of common people, We would not be a benevolent sovereign, but an incapable one."

His words grew smoother and smoother until they were no different from an ordinary person's. It was just that his voice was a little hoarse.

No one noticed what he and Eunuch Lin were saying, because everyone was still stunned at the fact that he could speak.

His Majesty was not mute, could actually speak? Then why didn't he speak normally? Not even Eunuch Lin, who had served at his side for ten-some years, knew that he could speak.

Perhaps one could say that this was some hidden card, but what use was there in keeping it secret?

Seeing the several dozen stunned gazes, Yuren knew what everyone was thinking. He had originally planned to not answer, but after thinking about it, he decided to explain.

"I do not know how to lie, so when I left the capital as a child, Master instructed me to not speak. Later on, I got used to not speaking.

"In Xining Village, there were times when I did not need to even gesture to Master or Junior Brother. A glance was all that was needed to communicate, so there was no need to speak.

"Later on in the capital, while I was emperor, the most I did every day was read memorials, so it was fine if I just wrote with the brush. There was also no need to speak.

"Even during the court sessions, I realized that it was best to listen and not speak, because this saved time and left things peaceful.

"Since there was no need to speak, why should I have to speak?"

.....

.....

If there was no need, there was naturally no reason to do it.

No one would decide to run a dozen times around the continent

without good reason, passing through the plains, mountains, and the four seasons countless times, not unless their wife had quietly left in the middle of the night.

The Prince of Xiang said, "So it turns out that Your Majesty was playing dumb."

Yuren replied, "Yes, I read the records regarding Emperor Taizong as well as the records of the wise sovereigns from other dynasties, and I realized that they were all skilled in playing dumb."

The Prince of Xiang fell into deep thought, and then he shook his head. "Your Majesty is truly extraordinary. It is fortunate that you only hid the fact that you could speak."

Yuren wanted to say something, but he was too late. After all, this was the first time in many years that he had spoken, so his reaction was inevitably somewhat slow.

"In the future, I will also learn how to play dumb."

The Prince of Xiang added, "But please write the decree of abdication first. This matter does not require speaking, only writing. Your Majesty should be very practiced."

Yuren did not speak, only shook his head.

The Prince of Xiang sighed and said, "Then please forgive me."

At this moment, the small eunuch standing behind the golden railing on the second floor suddenly walked out and took off her hat.

She looked at the Prince of Xiang and asked, "Your Highness, are you sure that you want to do this?"

The tumbling black hair and her moving beauty caused many of the old ministers to quickly recognize who this girl was.

"Your Highness! Princess!"

The crowd wondered in shock, does Luoluo's sudden appearance

in the Great Zhou Imperial Palace represent the stance of the demi-humans?

But then what was going on with the North-Pacifying Army assisting the rebel army in surrounding the Imperial Palace?

The Prince of Xiang gazed blankly at Luoluo, and then he smiled and shook his head.

Cao Yunping also smiled and said with a gentle expression, "Princess, stop playing around."

This sort of attitude that one saw when elders were speaking to their juniors should not have appeared at a time like this.

Luoluo raised her brow and said, "Before I entered the palace, I already persuaded the North-Pacifying Army. Xuanyuan Po is at the Orthodox Academy right now precisely so he can stop all of you."

Cao Yunping faintly smiled. "If the venerable Daoist and Chen Changsheng led the army back south, you and Xuanyuan Po would be troops waiting in ambush, because the White Emperor would appear and defeat me and His Highness, becoming the savior of the Great Zhou. Since the venerable Daoist did not return, it means that he has given up on His Majesty, and the White Emperor will not appear, so anything you do will be meaningless."

Luoluo understood what he meant and her small face paled.

Everything was in the White Emperor's palm. Otherwise, how could she have been able to easily escape White Emperor City, and how could Xuanyuan Po have remained concealed in the North-Pacifying Army for so long?

The Prince of Xiang and Cao Yunping were completely unaware of her and Xuanyuan Po's existence.

But she and Xuanyuan Po were chess pieces, actors that followed the White Emperor's will, constantly changing roles.

Since the White Emperor had still not appeared, it meant that he had decided to comply with the agreement he had made with the Prince of Xiang.

This also meant that, just like Cao Yunping said, everything that Luoluo and Xuanyuan Po did was meaningless.

Luoluo suddenly recalled that matter from ten years ago.

Mu Jiushi had been killed at sea.

Luoluo had always believed that Shang Xingzhou had arranged this, but now it seemed like her father had been involved.

The moment she found out about the agreement between the White Emperor and the Prince of Xiang, she informed Chen Changsheng as quickly as possible and then traveled day and night over the eighty thousand li to the capital to offer her aid.

It had already been many days since she had had any rest. The sudden realization of the uninteresting truth caused all her fatigue to well up and her body to sway.

A hand rested on her shoulder, supporting her.

It was a wide and firm hand. Even through her clothes, she could feel its warmth.

Luoluo came to her senses and retreated to the side.

She had no idea why she did this. Perhaps her teacher had ordered her to do this, but she had forgotten.

Mo Yu, the Prince of Louyang, Grand Tutor Bai Ying, and all the ministers and guards did the same.

The crowd parted like a tide and Yuren walked out.

His speed was very slow, because the entire world knew that he was lame in one leg.

But no matter how slowly one walked, as long as one was willing to walk, one would eventually reach the other shore.

This was the case whether it was the stream of Xining Village, the river of wisdom, or the rivers and seas painted on the golden bricks on the ground.

Yuren walked up to the Prince of Xiang and stopped.

This was the first time the Prince of Xiang had seen him from so close.

The blind eye, the half-missing earlobe, the shoulder that leaned slightly to the left—these features gradually began to fade from his sight.

All that was left was that clean face.

A hint of confusion appeared in the Prince of Xiang's eyes, then suspicion, then shock, and finally amusement.

He slapped his palm at Yuren's head.

This palm was so soft that there seemed to be no bones within. It burned with the flames of an invisible sun, contained a monstrous Qi.

The guards came to their senses and shouted in surprise. They heedlessly charged, hoping to take this blow for the emperor.

Suddenly, a powerful wave of Qi, almost like an actual wave of water, swept the guards onto the steps.

The golden railings shattered and dust rose.

.....

.....

According to the after-action report, very few people saw what actually happened next.

The light was so strong that one needed to immediately close one's eyes to not go blind.

Even people of extremely high cultivation level like Mo Yu and Luoluo could only see a blurry picture.

A bright curtain of light appeared in the center of the hall. Compared to this light, the Night Pearls were like the embers of burned weeds.

Two figures could faintly be seen in this curtain of light. One of them was a little fat, making them the Prince of Xiang, and the other was naturally Yuren.

Two palms met in the air.

The curtain of light sprung from where their palms met.

A sun shone there.

.....

.....

The dark clouds in the sky were completely driven away.

The stars had just barely begun to emerge before they were drowned out.

Countless rays of light shot out of the Imperial City and into the sky.

The capital was returned to daytime.

The people observing the monoliths in the Mausoleum of Books turned their heads in shock while the squirrels in the dark forests awoke from their slumber and began to jump about.

In the Li Palace, the vigilant Orthodoxy cavalry began to flip open the visors of their helmets and look toward the night sky.

Everyone saw a sun.

The Prince of Zhongshan was organizing a group of cavalry on the Road of Peace, preparing to charge into the Imperial Palace to protect the emperor.

The sky suddenly brightened and he raised his head, upon which he found himself incapable of looking away.

He squinted his eyes and stared for a very long time until that sun

gradually faded away.

"Ah, such a beautiful sun..."

The Prince of Zhongshan was overcome with emotion. He waved his hand, ordering his subordinates to cancel the attack on the palace.

He got off his horse, took a bath, and then had the kitchen make a bowl of zhajiangmian. After adding half a spoon of garlic, he began to heartily dig in.

Upon seeing this sight, the beautiful concubine couldn't help but think the same as the strategist who had died in the daytime: are these noodles that tasty?

Of course, she was much smarter than that strategist. By the time the words had left her mouth, they had become, "We're not saving His Majesty?"

The Prince of Zhongshan mumbled out a few words as he ate.

The concubine heard the first sentence from the prince as 'His Majesty doesn't need us to save him and we're all idiots.'

After some serious thought, she confirmed that the second sentence was 'It will be a bright and sunny day tomorrow.'

.....

.....

"Many years ago, truly many years ago, before Imperial Father's eyes began to have problems, you know, oh, you don't know, there was a study over there. It was in that study that I first heard the secrets of that style. At the time, I felt like this style was incredibly formidable. The sun was so hot, so bright, so how could it be put in my body?"

The Prince of Xiang continued, "Imperial Father said that I was wrong. That sun would only become a true sun once it left our bodies. I thought to myself, that's also very formidable! In order to

see that sun, I incessantly cultivated, but even after I became the strongest member of the Imperial clan, I still didn't see it. Even after I crossed that threshold ten years ago, I still didn't see that sun, so over the last few years, I often thought to myself, was Imperial Father teasing me back then?"

Yuren replied, "No."

The Prince of Xiang silently regarded him for a while. "Yes, it was only today that I finally knew that it was true, that Imperial Father had not tricked me."

Yuren was quiet for a while, then he said, "I also only found out today."

The Prince of Xiang said, "Such a powerful Blazing Sun Style—not even Emperor Taizong could have been better, no?"

Yuren answered, "I do not know."

The Prince of Xiang sighed, "Your Majesty is crippled in body but whole in spirit, truly the light of the Daoist faith, the light of the Chen clan."

This was the sincerest praise.

But he was still a little confused.

"But why did Your Majesty have to conceal your cultivation?"

The Prince of Xiang bitterly said, "If we had known this, how could we have ever thought about rebellion?"

Yuren apologetically said, "No one ever asked me... and I also never had an opportunity to use it."

The Prince of Xiang was a little stunned by these words, and then he couldn't help but smile.

It was still the same principle.

Yuren could speak, but he did not speak.

He could create a sun in the night sky of the capital, but he did

not.

Because he did not want to, and there was no need.

This was what it meant to follow one's heart.

"Your Majesty is truly the son of Imperial Father and Mother."

The Prince of Xiang was finally at ease, but he still felt a little regret.

"Why couldn't I be Imperial Mother's son?"

Upon saying this, his body dispersed into countless rays of light, shattering into the finest crystals to be swept away in the night wind.

Chapter 1170 – You've Lost

The Prince of Xiang died, but Cao Yunping had already fled and was now ten-some li away by the shore of the Luo River.

Even from such a distance, the people in the palace could still hear his voice trembling in fear as it repeated, "Your Majesty, spare my life!"

Eunuch Lin's face was pale.

Tonight was the sole stain on his life.

But he was still Eunuch Lin, and he knew what the words 'moral integrity' meant. He could not be as shameless as Cao Yunping and grovel on the floor to plead for his life.

He turned his palm and slapped it down to the top of his head, at the same time reversing the flow of his true essence as he prepared to finish himself off. He acted with extreme determination, leaving himself no chance of survival.

But his palm stopped at the top of his head, and his true essence seemed to freeze in his meridians, unable to surge into his Ethereal Palace.

"Leave. Don't come back to the palace. This... is not that good of a place."

Yuren said to him.

Eunuch Lin froze.

For Emperor Xian's sake, he had spent the majority of his life in the Imperial Palace.

Even after he was driven back to his old home by the Tianhai Divine Empress, he would spend every day thinking about his life in the palace.

No one had ever told him to not come back, not even if it was for morality and justice, reluctance, or any other reason.

And no one had ever told him that it was not a good place.

Eunuch Lin left the Imperial Palace, somewhat dejected. One could even say he was deprived of his soul.

No one cared about his departure. Everyone's eyes were focused on Yuren.

No one had expected the emperor to possess such an unfathomable cultivation.

The sun had vanished, and the night clouds were driven by the autumn winds into once more shrouding the capital, blocking out the countless stars.

Yuren gazed at a certain place in the clouds. Upon confirming that the White Emperor had left, he looked to the north, concern visible on his face.

.....

.....

Xuelao City, the Demon Palace.

Chen Changsheng answered the Demon Lord's question in a forthright manner. "Master and I are not worried about the capital because Senior is there."

The Demon Lord sneered, "Did you think that you could trick me? When you left Xining Village, you hadn't even started to cultivate, and he probably hadn't either. Afterward, there was a limit to the number of times the two of you could meet. I am confident that he never once displayed his abilities in front of you."

Chen Changsheng replied, "Yes, even now, no one has ever seen Senior display his abilities."

The Demon Lord asked, "Then how can you determine his strength? And don't give me some nonsense like 'He's my senior brother'."

Chen Changsheng said, "I also only understood later on."

"Understood what?"

Chen Changsheng explained, "Why Senior came out of the shrubs on the night the Tianhai Divine Empress died."

The Demon Lord's expression turned stern as he asked, "What do you want to say?"

Chen Changsheng continued, "He followed Master to the Mausoleum of Books during the day, which meant that he only needed one day to finish viewing all the Heavenly Tome Monoliths."

The Demon Lord's pupils constricted as he declared, "Preposterous! You think he couldn't have had any other ways?"

He had never gone to the Mausoleum of Books, but he knew of its rules.

In the Mausoleum of Books, only by comprehending one Heavenly Tome Monolith could one move on to the next, gradually climbing higher and higher until one finally reached the summit.

No one had ever been able to break this law. Even Zhou Dufu needed to finish seeing all the Heavenly Tome Monoliths first.

Based on what Chen Changsheng said, Yuren had finished viewing all the Heavenly Tome Monoliths in a single day. And if one further remembered that Yuren had heard Chen Changsheng's voice and was in a rush to save him, he must have easily passed those Heavenly Tome Monoliths by just hastily looking over them.

This really might have been the truth, but the Demon Lord could not accept it.

No one had ever done such a thing. It was rumored that Zhou Dufu had pulled off this feat, but the Li Palace had never confirmed it.

Chen Changsheng's feat of comprehending the entire front mausoleum in a single day was enough to shock the entire

continent. What did it mean if Yuren had succeeded in comprehending the entire Mausoleum of Books in a single day?

It meant that he possessed an unfathomable talent and power.

If all of this was true, the rebellion led by the Prince of Xiang and Cao Yunping was more like a farce to Yuren.

The Demon Lord could even imagine that not even the White Emperor would dare to lightly act.

The offspring of the Tianhai Divine Empress and the Chen clan was truly terrifying.

The Demon Lord even felt that the rumor about defying the heavens and changing fate was false. The suffering that Yuren had to bear upon being born simply might have been because the heavens were envious of him...

"It seems like we really can only surrender?"

"Yes."

The black demon flames were like a swamp, absorbing all light.

The creeping Qi of the abyss made everyone feel rather uncomfortable.

The Demon Hall was very quiet and empty. There were no slaves, no concubines.

The only people present were several officials wearing small white hats and ten-some red-cloaked elders standing around the Demon Lord.

The Demon Lord pointed at those white-hatted officials and said, "They are all historians. The final moments of my race's history should be completely recorded."

He then pointed at the elders attired in those small red cloaks and said, "These are the wisest scholars of my race. I think you and that emperor probably have enough brains to judge that my race's culture should be amply protected and preserved. Extermination

doesn't mean that everything needs to be exterminated."

These two statements finally caused Wang Po and Xiao Zhang to feel a little differently about the Demon Lord.

The demeanor of a sovereign could be understood as stubborn endurance, but this sort of unaffected composure and ease had always been pursued by experts like them.

Chen Changsheng returned, "As I said in White Emperor City, there will be no extermination."

Ten years ago, in that large courtyard of yellow sand neighboring the Xiang clan's estate, he and the young Demon Lord had discussed many topics.

These topics had involved what lay beyond the starry sky, a thousand autumns and ten thousand generations, and, naturally, the future of the Human and Demon races.

There was also an even greater secret that only Xu Yourong, Tang Thirty-Six, and the little Black Dragon knew. Chen Changsheng and the Demon Lord had been exchanging letters for all these intervening ten years.

They did not exchange letters too often, only two or three each year, but they had never stopped.

This was also something they had agreed on in White Emperor City.

At the start, they wanted to imitate Grand Scholar Tungus and the Pope of that generation, but at the end, they helplessly realized that the contents of their letters had become negotiations.

If the humans won, what conditions would the demons need to make them willing to surrender?

There had been no answer to this.

Even now, there was still no answer.

"The servants will become slaves, living out their bitter lives in

dark and damp mines. The Divine race will be forced to intermarry, and its blood will gradually be diluted, perhaps depriving them of the ability to be an independent race. In my view, this is no different from extermination. I cannot accept it."

The Demon Lord added, "Moreover, the Divine race has always been the master of this world, of all worlds. How can we surrender to you mortals?"

Chen Changsheng earnestly said, "But you've still lost."

Chapter 1171 – The Origin of the Demon Race

The Demon Lord was quiet for a while, then he said, "Yes, but do you know why we lost?"

This was truly a puzzling question, especially with regards to how the demons had lost so quickly.

Chen Changsheng replied, "I thought about it for a very long time, but it was only when I saw those tribal warriors outside Xuelao City at the end that I finally recalled that matter you mentioned in your letter."

The primary reason for the decline of the Demon race, that had resulted in their being completely surpassed by the Human race over these last one thousand years, was that their birth rate was too low.

It took far too long for lower-class demons to naturally evolve into higher-class demons, and the higher-class demons were much less fertile. As time passed and the demons began to rule a larger and larger territory, their population took the opposite trajectory. In the end, their numbers became so few that they could no longer gather sufficient soldiers, and those tribal warriors were too unintelligent to take the human armies head-on.

The Demon Lord pointed at him and said, "Yes, you should remember the reason I gave you."

Chen Changsheng recalled the period of history that the Demon Lord had recounted in one of his letters.

The Demon Lord said that these were the most authentic records of the world, and he had only learned of them after ascending to the throne.

The Demon Lord had even said that only five people knew of these records, including himself and the Grand Scholar.

With this letter, Chen Changsheng became the sixth.

Chen Changsheng did not understand why the Demon Lord wanted to tell him, so he naturally found it hard to confirm whether it was true.

According to the Demon Lord, countless years ago, the five continents of this world were not so far apart as they were now. One could easily travel between them.

The species that ruled this world was the Divine race, now the Demon race of the Central Continent.

As time passed, the structure of the world gradually became unstable, and many changes took place. The Divine Kingdom and the Netherworld gradually began to stray from the main continent, ultimately being lost in the endless and chaotic flow of time. All that they left were several extremely dangerous paths, with the abyss behind the Demon Lord being one of them.

The disappearance of the Divine Kingdom and the Netherworld wrought many terrifying changes. The vitality of the main continent gradually began to drain away, causing it to grow more and more desolate. The ruling Divine race and the other intelligent beings were forced to migrate, and the main continent was ultimately abandoned and came to be known as the Forsaken Land.

The Divine race went to the Sacred Light Continent to continue their civilization, but they realized that the Fire of Civilization of the Divine Kingdom had been lost in another continent.

This Fire of Civilization was the Heavenly Tome Monoliths, and that continent was the Central Continent.

The Divine race dispatched an expeditionary force. Using the Netherworld path, which was still barely traversable, it traveled from the Sacred Light Continent to the Central Continent in order to take back the Fire of Civilization. To the expeditionary force's surprise, in that long period of time, the native species of the Central Continent had been awakened by the Fire of Civilization, and now began to fight with the Divine race's expeditionary force.

Those native species were the humans and the demi-humans.

The expeditionary force was naturally the current Demon race.

.....

.....

"It turns out that this war has still not truly come to an end."

Upon hearing this story, the crowd was overcome with emotions. The Tang Old Master's wrinkles deepened somewhat, but Divine General He Ming's thoughts were on the meaning of this war.

"The war between us and that war from ancient times have nothing to do with each other."

The Demon Lord shook his head and explained, "As that war continued to intensify, the Netherworld continued to distance itself, and the continents were completely cut off from each other. By now, it would be very difficult to reach the Sacred Light Continent through both the abyss behind me and that mountain in the Cloud Grave, so the commander of the expeditionary force made an extremely difficult choice.

"That commander was my progenitor, the first Demon Lord." The Demon Lord added this explanation before continuing, "He stopped the war, making temporary peace with the humans and demi-humans, and then destroyed all the items related to the Sacred Light Continent. He began to construct his own city on this continent, his home."

Xu Yourong, still holding the young Daoist boy, had said nothing this whole time. Now, she suddenly praised, "A wise and prompt decision."

The Demon Lord faintly smiled at her and said, "Correct, my race continued to live this way on the Central Continent, with all the Demon Lords and Grand Scholars that followed continuing my progenitor's methods, using harsh laws to ultimately wipe away any memories of the Sacred Light Continent and making this place

our homeland."

The Tang Old Master sighed, "Time is powerful."

The Demon Lord said, "Alas, there was a serious problem. Those Demon Lords and Grand Scholars realized that without an environment of Sacred Light, my race's fertility would be deeply impacted. By the time of Grand Scholar Tungus's era, he had already determined that this was a degeneration that could not be reversed."

The topic had once more returned to the initial question: why the demons had lost this war.

The Demon Lord had vaguely mentioned this matter in his letters, which Chen Changsheng did not understand, but he was even more confused on another aspect.

Divine General He Ming, Xiao Zhang and the others also did not understand.

A decrease and degeneration in fertility was an extinction-level threat to a race. In the face of this matter, what the demons needed to do was naturally reopen that path and return to the Sacred Light Continent. Why had the successive generations of Demon Lords and Grand Scholar Tungus never considered this course of action?

Chen Changsheng asked, "Just what is it in the Sacred Light Continent that all of you fear so greatly? That would make you watch as the Demon race withered away over returning?"

"God."

The Demon Lord stared into Chen Changsheng's eyes. "If the path between this place and the Sacred Light Continent is reopened, we will all become God's servants."

.....

.....

At the start, many people were shocked to see Chen Changsheng

and the Demon Lord being so familiar with each other, and the Tang Old Master's eyes had turned rather dark.

No one believed that Chen Changsheng would collude with the demons, but they still found the circumstances rather strange and odd.

But the crowd was quickly entranced by the contents of their conversation.

The shocking legends of ancient times, the true history hidden behind the black curtains: the demons had originally been an expeditionary force from the Sacred Light Continent!

But what was God? That sole, fixed and objective will that only ignorant women and children believed in?

There was no God in the Central Continent. The Orthodoxy believed in the Great Dao, not something with any objective existence.

The gods that people spoke of were only the imaginary constructs of the tales and legends, perhaps even purely mental projections.

The Divine Kingdom existed above the sea of stars as the home that all souls returned to, but it was just a symbol.

Did God truly exist in the Sacred Light Continent?

Everyone fell silent at the Demon Lord's words, and not even Xiao Zhang spoke.

"Isn't the Divine Kingdom gone?"

No one had expected the young Daoist boy to break the silence.

He was lying in Xu Yourong's chest and hugging her neck. His bright eyes were wide open and curiously aimed at the Demon Lord.

At some point, he had broken free of fear and sorrow and listened to the entirety of this story.

The Demon Lord did not answer this question, because he had no answer.

All that was effable and ineffable about God had been words that he had only been able to see after ascending to the throne.

From his silence, one could imagine how powerful was the mental blow those words had inflicted on him.

Xiao Zhang finally couldn't help but ask, "Is God so powerful?"

"Those two Battle Angels that descended ten years ago in White Emperor City were only God's servants."

The Demon Lord paused, then added, "Once, we were as well."

'We' here referred to the Imperial clan of Xuelao City.

Dazed, Xiao Zhang muttered, "Pretty tragic."

The humans and demi-humans, who had obtained the Mausoleum of Books and the fire within, were called stealers of fire by the Sacred Light Continent.

The first Demon Lord, on the other hand, was called a Fallen Angel.

In the Sacred Light Continent, he had been an Angel, the leader of an army of Angels.

He had fallen because he had been tempted by a devil and refused to return to God's embrace.

This devil's name was freedom.

No one was willing to be a servant, not even if it was a servant of God.

Thus, the first Demon Lord had resolved to stay here.

Thus, not a single one of the Demon Lords that succeeded him or Grand Scholar Tungus had any desire to return to the Sacred Light Continent.

"I can understand this feeling."

Chen Changsheng replied, "Once I was free of the shadow of death, I felt like the entire world had gotten lighter."

The Demon Lord replied, "Compared to death, that is an even more intrinsic sort of freedom."

Chen Changsheng replied, "Compared to the answer, the reason you brought up the question is even more important."

This tale of the past had resulted from the Demon Lord's question.

Why had the demons lost to the humans?

What was the reason the Demon Lord had brought up this question?

"I still haven't finished. There is one other important reason that my race lost... The Military Advisor wanted us to lose."

The Demon Lord's complexion paled, but his lips became so red that they seemed to have been adorned with lipstick.

"She personally made all the plans for this war, and then she wanted us to lose, so how could we not lose?"

Several cries of shock arose within the Demon Hall.

Black Robe was the Demon Military Advisor and wielded immense power. Most importantly, she had personally arranged all the strategies and specific tactics of the demons.

If what the Demon Lord said was true and Black Robe wanted the demons to lose, the demons truly had no reason to not lose.

But why would Black Robe do this?

No one would believe some tragic and inspiring story of sudden repentance. There was assuredly some deeper reason behind it.

Chapter 1172 – The Secret of the Stars

"Borrowing the effects of the defeats on the battlefield, she mobilized many resources to set up a sacrificial altar in the city."

The Demon Lord continued, "And then she convinced many elders and that senior of mine to agree to use the souls of demon soldiers lost on the battlefield as an offering to the starry sky."

Chen Changsheng felt an ill foreboding when he heard about this offering to the starry sky. "Who are you offering to, and what are you seeking?"

The Demon Lord said in a derisive tone, "Naturally, we're offering to the Sacred Light Continent on the other side of the starry sky. Those elders hope that the Sacred Light Continent can send us aid, and some of the timider nobles even hope that they can be sent to the Sacred Light Continent, naturally allowing them to escape the danger and pain of the extermination of a race."

Chen Changsheng asked, "Weren't the origins of the demons wiped away? How could they know?"

"In this half-year of continuous war, the chaotic situation meant that many rules lost effectiveness. Many secrets naturally leaked out."

The Demon Lord turned to a certain Grand Scholar.

The Grand Scholar's face suddenly went white and he began to vomit blood.

The blood was not red, gold, or green. It was black.

This Grand Scholar had clearly been poisoned. He moaned, "Even if I hadn't said it, the Military Advisor would still know everything."

The Demon Lord calmly answered, "But you still said it."

The Grand Scholar collapsed, twitching twice before ceasing to

breathe.

The Demon Lord turned to the humans, primarily Xu Yourong, and apologetically said, "Please, excuse me."

Chen Changsheng did not notice, as his mind was focused on his words from just now.

If the upper layer of the Demon race had placed all their hopes on that sacrificial altar, it would naturally be very difficult for them to put their all into the battlefield, both subjectively and objectively. This being the case, the demons would fall into an even more disastrous situation, and the worse it was, the more they would entrust their hopes to the sacrificial altar. That sacrificial altar was like that swamp outside Xuelao City. If one fell in it, one would find it nigh impossible to get back up no matter how they struggled. The Demon Lord should have been able to see this, so why did he not stop Black Robe? Why did he not destroy that sacrificial altar?

The Demon Lord looked at Chen Changsheng and said, "I think that you've probably guessed. Yes, I also wanted to hold onto that last sliver of hope."

Chen Changsheng asked, "Even if that went against the will of all the Demon Lords before you?"

The Demon Lord sighed, "I didn't want to do it, but you pushed me too hard."

Chen Changsheng noted, "You already did this ten years ago."

He referred to those two Angels that had appeared in White Emperor City.

"There will be a massive difference."

The Demon Lord solemnly said, "Because the number will be different."

After saying this, he spread his arms apart.

His black cloak rose into the stagnant air.

The congealed darkness of the demon flames also swayed, objects flickering within them.

They were statues, tall and short, none of them larger than a foot. They were made of some mysterious material that was neither gold nor jade.

Some of the statues were half-crouched while some of them seemed ready to take flight. All of them were naked and lifelike, beyond the handiwork of any sculptor.

Chen Changsheng's face turned grave.

These statues gave off no Qi, yet they gave off this strange aura that made it seem like they could come to life at any moment.

Wang Po and the others felt an intense danger.

Just like Chen Changsheng, they all thought of the two Angels in White Emperor City, of Bie Yanghong.

If every one of these statues was an Angel, just how many statues were displayed before them?

The demon flames danced.

The darkness was restless, yet all was deathly still.

Many questions had been answered.

Black Robe's grudge against the Human race was truly as deep as the Western Sea. She was willing to do anything to destroy the humans. In the last several hundred years, she had hoped that she could rely on the demons to destroy the humans. Upon realizing that the momentum had shifted and this had become an impossible mission, she had immediately chosen the other path.

She callously pushed the demons along the path of defeat, forcing the demons into desperate straits as quickly as possible, compelling the demons to march to her tune. Mobilizing countless resources, she had a sacrificial altar constructed, intending to welcome the

descent of an army of Angels from the Sacred Light Continent.

"Just what is your meaning in telling this story tonight?"

Chen Changsheng asked the Demon Lord.

The Demon Lord drew back his smile and stared into his eyes. Calmly and firmly, he said, "Retreat from Xuelao City, or else I will agree to Black Robe's request."

"This is a good story," Wang Po commented.

The Tang Old Master agreed, "It truly is a good story."

This story, or to be more precise, the way this story was told, had made them feel that the Demon Lord was an outstanding individual.

If not for the fact that this Demon Lord had been given too little time, if the momentum of the world had not already been decided, perhaps the Demon race really might have experienced a revival.

At the start, if the Demon Lord had not invited these historians and scholars to be present as he spoke about extermination and civilization, creating a somber and tragic mood, but had chosen to go straight to telling the story, no one would have believed him. They would have thought that he was just using absurd reasons to buy time. But instead, the Demon Lord had slowly worked his way from the Sacred Light Continent to God, and then to Black Robe. By plucking on their heartstrings, he perfectly recounted this story, granting it history and weight that compelled them to believe.

"But there is one problem: what does Black Robe want from you?"

Wang Po continued, "If you have no significance to this story, then there's no meaning in telling this story, no matter how well it's told."

"She does not need me, but this."

He extended his right hand out of his sleeve.

There was no statue in his hand, but a stone pestle.

It was a very ordinary-looking stone pestle, but it was far from ordinary.

Even the stone pearls on Chen Changsheng's wrist reacted, lightly clacking against each other.

This stone pestle came from the same place as the Heavenly Tome Monoliths, and was built of the same material, but it had a completely different use.

The Astral Executioner.

The forbidden secret of the Demon race.

A supreme divine artifact that had not appeared in the world for tens of thousands of years.

In the snowy mountain range, the old Demon Lord had died beneath the starlight that it had summoned.

Chen Changsheng had seen the Astral Executioner before.

Later on, he had the Li Palace priests draw the Astral Executioner according to his description and had copies distributed throughout the counties and provinces.

Figures like the Tang Old Master and Wang Po were naturally the first to see these drawings. Thus, they needed only a glance to confirm that this truly was the Astral Executioner.

This made the Demon Lord's story seem even more authentic.

If the Demon Lord and Black Robe worked together and used the sacrificial altar and the Astral Executioner to open the spatial path, Angels from the Sacred Light Continent would descend one after the other...

The demon flames danced, the statues flickering within.

Everyone took in this sight with the gravest of expressions.

Even if these Angels were not as powerful as the two Battle

Angels who had appeared in White Emperor City, based on retrospective analysis, those Angels of Sacred Light were capable of naturally comprehending the laws of the world. In other words, from the moment they began to exist, they were experts of the Divine Domain!

Of course, the Human race was not completely unprepared for the worst situation. For the last ten years, the Great Zhou Imperial Court, the Li Palace, and all the sects had often analyzed the battle of White Emperor City, seeking ways of killing the Angels of Sacred Light. Moreover, they had made some progress, but this had all been established on the prerequisite of a small number of Angels.

At present, all the Divine Domain experts of the Human race were either heavily wounded or in the middle of rebelling. If there were so many Angels, how could the humans win?

And there was an even more frightening prospect. If... the God of the Sacred Light Continent decided to descend, what could they do?

Would the Human race go extinct?

The atmosphere was extremely oppressive.

But there was still someone who did not believe the Demon Lord's story.

"Isn't this just a club made of stone? Do you really think we're just a bunch of clubs? [Tian Chui](#) has been dead for ten-some years now!"

Xiao Zhang continued, "We've prepared for so many years, fought for so long, and lost so many people, so how can one story make us retreat?"

These words touched the hearts of Divine General He Ming and a few others.

What if he was right, and the Demon Lord was just scaring them?

The wrinkles at the corners of the Tang Old Master's eyes deepened. Concern lingered within them.

He felt like the Demon Lord's words were true.

Wang Po and Xu Yourong thought the same.

Chen Changsheng had seen with his own eyes that pillar of light piercing through the sea of stars, so he should have been the one who believed in this story the most.

But he faintly recalled that the Astral Executioner could no longer be used, and then he recalled a conversation he had heard that night.

He turned to the Demon Lord and asked, "The sacrificial altar is for breaking the wall? The Astral Executioner is used to indicate the location?"

The Demon Lord replied, "I didn't expect you to remember my conversation with Father."

Chen Changsheng asked, "Ten years ago, only two Angels descended, so you could treat them as slaves. Black Robe's plans now are clearly not so limited. If too many Angels descend, what will happen to you? So you've been hesitating, struggling, and even now, you haven't decided what to do."

The Demon Lord faintly smiled. "Yes, so I leave this choice for you."

Chen Changsheng fell silent.

It now seemed like the contents of many the letters they had exchanged over the last ten years had been part of the Demon Lord's plans.

It had been a campaign of silent influence, and he now found it impossible to convince himself that there was no threat from the Sacred Light Continent.

The 'choice' here was more like a gamble, and he was betting the

entire Human race.

In terms of gambling, Xu Yourong and the Tang Old Master were far more capable, but they had never read those letters.

The contents of those letters were tiles that the Demon Lord had already played.

Only through those tiles could one attempt to determine what the Demon Lord's last tile was.

Suddenly, a voice came from the back of the crowd.

It was very sickly and strengthless, yet there was a terrible smugness in it that could irritate anyone.

"Everything he wrote in those letters is true, and the majority of his story is true, but what he's saying is false."

The Demon Lord peered at the back of the crowd, his brows arched. "Why?"

"Because your face has the resolve to die and also a smear of lovesickness, but there's no spirit. Back then, I used two hours to reverse the situation in Wenshui, and when I got out of the ancestral hall, I took a bath on the street. Even if you can't reach my elegant bearing and can't pull off such a refined feat, once you've succeeded in your reversal, you should be a little more arrogant. Such calmness can only mean that you're lying!"

Ye Xiaolian pushed a wheelchair out from behind the crowd.

Tang Thirty-Six was seated upon it.

The Chui of Tian Chui means 'club'.

Chapter 1173 – We Exchanged Letters

Tang Thirty-Six's tone of voice had always been the most loathsome existence in the world. Even when he wasn't cursing, no one liked to hear it.

But Chen Changsheng liked it, because Tang Thirty-Six was his best friend, and also because this fellow would always appear when he needed him the most. This fellow knew his true thoughts better than he did, and so whenever he didn't know what to choose, it was never wrong to listen to this fellow.

There was nothing reasonable about Tang Thirty-Six's words, but they were inexplicably persuasive.

"How did you get here?"

Chen Changsheng was very concerned about Tang Thirty-Six's health.

Based on Tang Thirty-Six's complexion, that strange and unrelenting fever had probably retreated, but his body was still extremely weak, or else he wouldn't have needed to sit in a wheelchair.

Tang Thirty-Six replied, "How could such an important moment in history happen without me?"

The Tang Old Master's face was a sheet of frost as he prepared to scold his grandson.

"Don't make me air out the family skeletons."

Tang Thirty-Six coughed.

Ye Xiaolian quickly patted him on the back.

Tang Thirty-Six waved her away and took out a pure white handkerchief from his sleeve to cover his mouth. His brow slightly creased in pain.

Neither the Tang Old Master nor Chen Changsheng could tell

whether this sickly scholar act was real or false, and it was naturally inconvenient for them to question it.

Xu Yourong glanced at Ye Xiaolian, and Ye Xiaolian bashfully lowered her head. From this moment, she knew that this pair had not even reached Mount Han before turning around mid-journey.

Tang Thirty-Six ignored these things and said to the Demon Lord, "I forgot to introduce myself."

The Demon Lord replied, "I recognize you."

Tang Thirty-Six said, "Yes, you were really rude to me back in White Emperor City. Didn't think that I would expose your trick ten years later, did you?"

The Demon Lord calmly returned, "In talking to yourself, you truly are the world's best."

Tang Thirty-Six noted, "It seems like you really don't know who I am."

The Demon Lord mocked, "Did you think this was enough to make you Su Li?"

Tang Thirty-Six sternly said, "Please permit me to introduce myself. I am Sir's pen friend."

The Demon Lord froze. "Pen friend?"

Tang Thirty-Six replied, "Yes. I've read all of Your Majesty's letters, and the first four letters sent to Your Majesty were all written by me."

The Demon Lord turned to Chen Changsheng and gravely said, "This is a little too much."

Chen Changsheng earnestly explained, "I'm not good at interacting with people, and we weren't familiar with each other at the start, so I was afraid that my words would be too awkward."

The Demon Lord recalled the contents of those letters and sighed, "And I thought that you were treating me as an intimate

friend from the start."

"Your Majesty, I still consider you an intimate friend, and I'm still willing to be the best of friends with you."

Tang Thirty-Six said to Demon Lord, "So, old friend... please give that object in your hand to me."

The Demon Lord calmly stared at him. Suddenly, he asked, "Where does your self-confidence come from?"

Tang Thirty-Six replied, " I don't know, but not even my grandfather is willing to play mahjong with me."

The Demon Lord said, "If not even the Tang Old Master is willing to play with you, I can presume that your mahjong skills are quite extraordinary."

"In truth, my mahjong skills are quite ordinary, and I'm far inferior to Grandfather and the Holy Maiden, but I have a move that can defeat the entire world."

Tang Thirty-Six sincerely declared, "I'm the best at flipping the table over. If I can't flip the table over, I'll bet all my assets."

"The Tang clan is the wealthiest clan in the Human race. If you bet all your assets against any other human, you're naturally guaranteed to win every gamble."

The Demon Lord sneered, "But if you bet all your assets against me, I'm afraid you won't have enough chips."

This was true. No matter how much wealth and resources the Tang clan possessed, how could they compare to the ruler of the demon domain?

Tang Thirty-Six seriously returned, "That's not guaranteed."

Another voice suddenly offered, "I'll join in."

The speaker was Xu Yourong, her expression calm.

Wang Po also bet Scholartree Manor.

More and more people joined.

Chen Changsheng and the Tang Old Master did not speak, but everyone knew what they would do.

Tang Thirty-Six sat in his wheelchair, staring into the Demon Lord's eyes with an unprecedented solemnity on his face.

What was being gambled was not the Tang clan, not the Li Palace, but the entire Human race.

The Demon Lord was quiet for a very long time. Finally, he asked, "Do the conditions in the letter still hold?"

Chen Changsheng replied, "Of course."

Tang Thirty-Six added, "I'll give you the best deal and use the ones in the eleventh letter."

"Okay."

The Demon Lord threw the stone pestle to Tang Thirty-Six.

Tang Thirty-Six caught it with his right hand, looked around, and threw it to the Tang Old Master.

This important divine artifact that could alter the fate of the world was thrown around in their hands like a worthless toy.

No one was surprised by Tang Thirty-Six's actions.

He had never treated any sort of precious object as a big deal. Many years ago in White Emperor City, he had just as casually thrown the Orthodoxy's Divine Staff to Chen Changsheng.

Only Ye Xiaolian, who was pushing the wheelchair, knew the truth of the matter.

She could clearly see that when Tang Thirty-Six caught the stone pestle, the back of his clothes had become instantly drenched in sweat. It was obvious that he was extremely nervous.

The Demon Lord looked at Tang Thirty-Six and asked, "Are you really not afraid?"

Tang Thirty-Six boldly said, "It's not like I'm an idiot, so how could I not be afraid!"

The Demon Lord was confused. "Then why did you act so calmly and flawlessly?"

"Perhaps it's because I've been richer than most since I was little."

Tang Thirty-Six added, "Both physically and spiritually."

.....

.....

In that last conversation that night, Shang Xingzhou had mentioned that Black Robe might have other tricks, but he said that Chen Changsheng did not need to worry too much.

It now appeared that Black Robe's final trick was probably this, but she had not expected the Demon Lord's opposition to be so intense.

Whether the Astral Executioner was still usable or not, it was now in the Tang Old Master's hands. Not even Black Robe would be able to take it back.

But the sacrificial altar was still there, which meant that the threat had not been completely vanquished.

"Where is the sacrificial altar?" Chen Changsheng asked.

The Demon Lord lightly waved his sleeve, and the demon flames flowed, gradually revealing an image within, the flickering sight of Xuelao City.

At a certain place, the demon flames were of a darker hue. It was like true darkness, devoid of any light.

The sacrificial altar was there.

Wang Po memorized this location, then turned and left the Demon Hall.

"The Demon Commander and the Second Demon General? And

where is Black Robe?"

Chen Changsheng looked at the Demon Lord and asked, "Since we've already reached an agreement, why spill more blood on both sides?"

The Demon Lord's lips curled into a mocking smile. "Can you not see that I am already a man alone in splendid isolation?"

.....

.....

'Alone in splendid isolation' was a phrase often used to refer to the emperors of the Human race, and it was rather unsuitable for the Demon Lord.

It was just like how these black square monoliths set up on the hill, both big and small, were unsuitable to use as gravestones.

Several thousand black monoliths signified several thousand upper-class demons who had died on the battlefield.

The higher they were to the peak of the hill, the more esteemed the identity of the demon.

Of course, other than that unfortunate successor of the Gruel clan, very few of the dukes of Xuelao City had died on the battlefield.

The graveyard was filled with wailing and weeping. The noble ladies wept over their deceased sons and the cut-up bodies of their husbands.

There were also many nobles looking up at the night sky with stupefied expressions, their faces covered in dust.

They knew that this graveyard had been made into a sacrificial altar by the Military Advisor that had sent information from this side to the Sacred Light Continent, so why had no pillar of light descended to bring them away?

The human army had already killed its way into Xuelao City, so

why were they still standing here?

The shouts and stamping horsehooves in the distance were probably the human cavalry cleaning up any resistance in the city.

The nobles were so numb that they didn't even feel fear, couldn't even hear those sounds.

Wang Po stood on the summit of the hill, silently gazing at the weeping wives and the nobles who were more like walking corpses.

His gaze moved over the graveyard, feeling the energy hidden in those black monoliths. He confirmed that the Demon Lord was not lying: this place was probably a sacrificial altar.

But he still felt like something was wrong. This sacrificial altar was probably not enough to break through space, and it certainly could not connect the two distant continents.

Was it as the Demon Lord said, that the sacrificial altar needed to work with the Astral Executioner to be completely effective?

While Wang Po was thinking of these questions, a shabbily-dressed and hunchbacked gravedigger on the east slope of the hill was about to leave.

This gravedigger had just dug out a fresh hole and placed a very ordinary body of a higher-class demon inside.

Both the gravedigger in a graveyard and a corpse in a grave were very normal things, but when one remembered that Xuelao City had just been invaded, they became extremely unusual.

A calm gaze descended upon that gravedigger and watched as they slowly walked down the slope.

Just when that gravedigger was about to disappear where the slope met the night sky, Wang Po spoke.

"Another round?"

The gravedigger stopped.

The wind ruffled the shabby clothes, revealing that the gravedigger was not a hunchback. She was just very short.

After some time, she finally turned around. "Okay."

Her voice was still gratingly hoarse.

The rust on her helmet seemed abnormally bewitching beneath the starlight.

Their first meeting had been in the plains in front of Mount Nuorilang, and their second in the swamp in front of Xuelao City.

Tonight, they had met once more in the graveyard, perhaps for the last time.

The Demon Commander pulled out her giant blade from the night wind and walked over to Wang Po.

If you have any questions, feel free to ping me on Discord or message me on Twitter.

Chapter 1174 – I've Been Waiting for You for a Long Time

Two sword glows, both imbued with a monstrously terrifying Qi, viciously clashed and then refused to die out. They transformed into the sharpest rays of light in the world, drawing out countless straight lines against the curtain of the night, summoning clouds from the distant horizon and blocking out the innumerable stars.

The wind roared, grass was sheared, and the black monoliths began to crack, their splinters transforming into terrifyingly sharp arrows. Screams began to rise from the graveyard as both the woman crying for their sons and the numb nobles waking from their dazes began to flee. But it was hard to say just how many of them would be able to survive.

After some time, the wind finally stopped. Gravel and mud rained back down to the ground as the two terrifying blade glows also ceased to shine.

The clouds in the night sky dispersed, allowing the starlight to once more illuminate the graveyard. Only now was it possible to realize that the slope of the hill had sunk several feet!

In the distance, the Moon gradually rose over the horizon.

The Demon Commander stood at the top of the slope. Her body was still short, but under the light of the full Moon, she seemed large and tall.

Her rusted helmet was in tatters from the battle and was casually tossed to the ground.

Her hair was gathered into a ponytail that pointed straight at the sky, making her look rather comical, like a little girl. Yet the expression on her face was incredibly evil.

Messy hairs stuck out around the ponytail, trembling in the wind like tree branches abandoned by the birds.

If one looked carefully, they would probably be able to see the wrinkles at the corners of her eyes, the streaks of white in her hair.

Wang Po stood at the bottom of the hill. There was a fine wound on the left side of his neck from which blood was seeping out.

If the Demon Commander's blade had struck just one inch deeper, his head would have been cut off and dropped down like a ripe fruit.

Wang Po was silent as he stared at that short figure at the top of the hill.

He had not expected that the monstrously powerful Demon Commander was a woman.

The Demon Commander turned to face Wang Po. "You might be stronger than me in the future, but not now."

Her face was cold and expressionless as she spoke. There was no emotion present, and none was needed for a simple statement like this.

Wang Po agreed, "Yes, I'm still a distance from you."

He did not conceal his respect for this supreme expert of the Demon race.

At Mount Nuorilang and in front of Xuelao City, Wang Po and the Demon Commander's two clashes of blades could be considered the most important points of those battles.

In both these clashes, the Demon Commander had always been just a little above him.

Although it was an extremely thin gap, it was as impassable as the vault of heaven.

In this last meeting, Wang Po had finally won, but this was because her injuries had been worse than his.

A few days ago, Xiao Zhang had used the Frost God Spear to leave a bloody hole in her chest, and up to now, it had shown no signs of

improvement.

Wang Po looked to the Demon Commander and said, "Senior, please tell me where Black Robe is."

The Demon Commander sneered, "Why should I tell you?"

Wang Po asked, "This sacrificial altar is clearly a ruse. Do you not hate Black Robe for orchestrating such an end for the demons?"

The Demon Commander laughed crazily. "Hahahaha! You males always look down on us women, so how can you know how formidable the Military Advisor is? She even managed to kill the older brother that not even I dared to provoke, fooled around with this entire continent for several hundred years. How could I hate her? I only adore her."

Wang Po didn't know what to say.

The Demon Commander turned to face the distant Moon.

Just when Wang Po thought she might recite a poem, he heard her utter a curse.

"A pack of idiots."

The Demon Commander said with a face of disgust, "They insist on learning from the humans and using starlight to replace Sacred Light, but how is it any better than moonlight! What Southern Cross? Just hearing that name stupefies me to death! Hmph!"

An arrogant snort.

That short figure scattered beneath the full moon.

Golden blood showered down, drenching the grassy slope in golden petals.

.....

.....

In the flickering image of Xuelao City in the demon flames, the location of the graveyard was extremely clear, because that

location was extremely dark.

Suddenly, two extremely thin lights appeared in that dark region before gradually fading away.

Everyone looked toward that place, so they were able to see the golden light illuminating the dark night.

The death of an expert on the level of the Demon Commander caused the world itself to react. Everyone in the Demon Hall sensed this and couldn't help but fall quiet.

"She is my aunt, an extraordinary woman... mm, it's just that she was always short."

The Demon Lord turned to Nanke and regretfully said, "Teacher and I hoped that you could become the second her, but you were too obedient and were tricked by Royal Father into entering the abyss."

Nanke had followed Chen Changsheng's party into the Demon Hall. She had said nothing the entire time, and the helpless expression on her face made her seem like a lost and wounded pet.

The Demon Lord very quickly shook off his sorrowful mood. He calmly asked Chen Changsheng, "The sacrificial altar is destroyed and an agreement has been made, so can I leave now?"

Everyone present knew that by 'leaving', he did not mean actually leaving, but something else.

Chen Changsheng did not reply to the question, instead saying, "I don't know if I should admire you or sympathize with you."

This comment did not refer to his leaving or his surrender, but the Demon Lord's train of thought over these last few days.

The human armies were at the city walls, so what should the demons do? Silently accept it, or go against the teachings of their ancestors and engage in one last crazy gamble?

The Demon Lord had probably been in deep pain over the last

few days.

.....

.....

"He wasn't suffering at all."

This voice was clearly heard within the Demon Hall, but it was impossible to tell where it was coming from.

"Many years ago, when Little Jiexing's troops were besieging Xuelao City, I recommended building a sacrificial altar and using the Astral Executioner to reopen the spatial path, but Xingshandong did not agree. His Majesty is just like his father, so he's in no pain whatsoever. He even gets the pleasure of dying for a just cause."

The voice disappeared for a while, and then began to speak again.

"I never sensed that God, so I do not understand their fears or where this obsession for freedom comes from."

It was a very pleasant voice, like the waters of a spring falling into a pool, or slender fingertips plucking the strings of a zither, and the hand to which those fingers were attached was also certain to be beautiful.

The black demon flames flowed once more. Like a withered tree growing out of a swamp, a piece of clothing gradually began to appear.

This clothing was black.

The demon flames, said to be capable of burning everything in the world, had failed to burn these clothes.

It was a black robe.

It turned out that she had been hiding in the abyss behind the demon flames. It was no wonder that the human armies had been unable to find any trace of her.

Zhizhi suddenly said, "They all say that your voice is very unpleasant, but this now appears to be a misrepresentation."

To be concerned about this sort of question at this sort of occasion... one could only say that her way of thinking truly was different from the rest.

The Tang Old Master said, "This is her original voice."

Upon seeing Black Robe, even he could not help but be affected, the well within his eyes rippling.

Black Robe ignored them and looked at the Demon Lord. "Even though Nanke is my student, you've always treated me as your teacher, and I've also held an extremely rare hint of pity for you. Alas, even after your ancestors' teachings struggled with the extinction of your race for so many days, you still were not willing to heed my will."

The Demon Lord was quiet for a while, then said, "That is because I love Sir and do not wish for Sir to become even uglier."

The humans were stunned by these words. Was he talking about the love toward a teacher, or...

The Demon Lord turned to Xu Yourong and smiled. "I also love you."

This referred to one of the most famous and controversial romantic scandals on the continent in the last few years. If there was one scandal that was on par with Chen Changsheng bringing out the marriage contract in the Ivy Festival ten-some years ago, it was probably when the Demon Lord made that announcement to the entire continent in his youth: "I absolutely want Xu Yourong."

Tonight, Xu Yourong had been very quiet in the Demon Hall, and the Demon Lord had also not spoken with her, so many people felt that the rumor was just a rumor, that the declaration had not been true. The demon invasion on the first year of the new era had only been to conceal the Demon race's weakness, not because the

Demon Lord truly wanted to propose to Xu Yourong.

But then, they heard his words.

Chen Changsheng did not interrupt the Demon Lord, and he wasn't even angry.

In his view, this was only to be expected.

How could such an extraordinary figure like the Demon Lord possibly not love Yourong?

"But I love the Military Advisor even more, because the Military Advisor is a freak."

The Demon Lord apologetically looked at Xu Yourong as he earnestly explained, "I am also a freak, and freaks sticking together give each other strength."

"Thank you. I thought that you would never say it."

Black Robe's voice was still pleasant. Though not deliberately graceful, it had its moving aspects.

The Demon Lord replied, "Everything's about to end, so I have to leave behind the words that I want to say."

"The ending's not here yet."

Black Robe gave him a pitying look. "Not even Xingshandong knew what I was really thinking, so how could you?"

The Demon Lord bitterly smiled. "I already gave the Astral Executioner to them."

"That object is in my hands."

The Tang Old Master said to Black Robe, "Back then, even if you wanted a star, anyone in Luoyang would be willing to pluck one down for you. Alas, that was then, and this is now."

The meaning of his words was crystal-clear. No matter what, he would not give the Astral Executioner to Black Robe.

Black Robe jeered, "Back then, my eyes had no place for minor

characters like you and Shang."

The Tang Old Master sighed, "That's right. At the time, you had the most glorious figure in the world at your side."

Black Robe sternly reproved, "It wasn't just back then. Even now, he is still the most glorious of all."

The Tang Old Master added, "But even if he reincarnated, he would not be able to take that object from me."

It was hard to say where he had hidden the Astral Executioner. Perhaps he had some special spatial artifact on his person.

Black Robe's lips curled into a derisive grin. "Who said I wanted the Astral Executioner?"

The Demon Lord said, "You once said to me that positions are relative, and our continent is always moving through the sea of stars."

These words naturally made Chen Changsheng recall Wang Zhice's notebook and those pictures he had calculated in the Mausoleum of Books.

The Demon Lord continued, "Even if you used the sacrificial altar to send news, the Sacred Light Continent cannot pin down our position, so how can they open the path?"

The meaning of these words seemed complicated, but it was actually very simple and clear.

If one stood on a plain and heard someone yelling at them, one could determine the direction the voice was coming from, but not the exact position.

One needed to maintain a constant connection, using a continuous exchange of information to shrink the range of error until one found the other.

Without the Astral Executioner, how could Black Robe establish a stable and persistent connection between the two continents?

Black Robe said, "As I said, I do not need the Astral Executioner."

The Demon Lord replied, "That's impossible. All the records clearly state that this is the only method to open the spatial path."

Black Robe answered, "I know of a method that can allow the Sacred Light Continent to pin down our position."

The Demon Lord asked in surprise, "What method?"

Black Robe turned to Chen Changsheng. "I've been waiting for you for a long time."

If you have any questions, feel free to ping me on Discord or message me on Twitter.

Chapter 1175 – You Are the Lighthouse

Deathly silence.

Black Robe stood above the stone steps, looking down on the crowd like a god looking over all living beings.

Some people did not understand the conversation from just now, and even more were perplexed by Black Robe's final statement.

Sensing the oppressive mood, Linghai Zhiwang and the others guessed that the situation seemed to have reversed, or even fallen under Black Robe's control, so they nervously looked to Chen Changsheng.

Chen Changsheng's face was rather pale. He had already understood what Black Robe meant. "Sacred Light?"

Black Robe replied, "Correct."

The wind stirred.

The young Daoist boy fell into Ye Xiaolian's chest.

Xu Yourong's hand fell on Chen Changsheng's shoulder.

Her wings of pure white were already unfurled.

A streak of fire would soon tear through the night sky.

She would bring Chen Changsheng as far away as she could possibly could in this brief moment of time.

She had also understood what Black Robe meant.

"It's too late."

Black Robe took a step forward.

The robe raised dust, in which one could see an invisible, transparent, and extremely thin string.

This string extended from the dark demon flames all the way to Chen Changsheng's body, where it was tied to his ankle.

"You have exchanged letters with His Majesty for many years, so you should know that the demon flames are Celestial Fire. They are of the same type as Sacred Light, but even hotter, though they do not show this in their appearance."

Black Robe gazed at him and said, "In a little while, the demon flames will ignite the Sacred Light in your body..."

Before she could finish speaking, a clattering filled the hall.

It was the sound of ice crystals falling to the floor.

The frosty air along the string gradually retreated as Zhizhi roared, "What vile thing is this!"

The crowd was also shocked. Not even the breath of the Black Frost Dragon could extinguish it!

Black Robe ignored her, asking, "You might become a torch? I don't know, as I've only theorized it, but the sight should be very beautiful."

Chen Changsheng thought it over and replied, "I don't know if it will be beautiful, but it should be very bright."

"It won't just be bright. The Sacred Light came from that continent, and the two share an invisible connection."

Black Robe continued, "His Majesty is correct. The stars move, and the Sacred Light Continent and the Central Continent are also moving. Separated by the vast sea of stars, it's very difficult for either side to be sure of the other's position. If a path were forcefully opened, those descending beings would easily go astray and become forever lost in the infinite void. But as long as the Sacred Light in your body is ignited, the Sacred Light Continent will always be able to be sure of our position over any distance, thus allowing them to open a path. In other words, you are an incomparably bright lighthouse."

'Lighthouse' was a very warm and soothing term, but here it was cold and despair-inducing.

"It seems that you've been planning this for many years."

Chen Changsheng looked down at his feet, where the crumbling snowflakes had revealed that invisible string of fire.

"Back then, it was me who sent over Chen Xuanba's blood. Your birth was a result of a transaction, and I was one of the three parties taking part in it."

Black Robe turned to that small carriage and said, "Your master was another party, though he had no idea what I wanted to do."

Shang Xingzhou wanted to turn Chen Changsheng into a tempting poisoned fruit.

Anyone would want to eat him.

But anyone who ate him would be poisoned to death or eat themselves to death.

If the Tianhai Divine Empress did not eat Chen Changsheng, Shang Xingzhou could still attempt to use Chen Changsheng to invite down a divine judgment to kill Tianhai.

But now, it seemed like the divine judgment was probably just the Astral Executioner, that pillar of light piercing through the sea of stars.

When the Demon Lord killed his father, he had no idea that the most important use of this divine artifact was communicating between the two continents.

To put it another way, Chen Changsheng was a different form of the Astral Executioner.

Xu Yourong suddenly asked, "You've never been to the Sacred Light Continent, so how did you make an agreement with them?"

Black Robe replied, "I am only offering a possibility. If the Sacred Light Continent's god is truly omniscient and omnipotent, how could it miss out on this chance?"

Chen Changsheng asked, "Why do you so loathe the Human

race?"

It was no longer a secret that the Demon Military Advisor Black Robe was a human.

Black Robe's answer was extremely simple and also unrelentingly persuasive.

That answer was their name.

"Because I am Zhou Yuren."

.....

.....

Zhou Yuren.

Once the most beautiful man in the world.

Zhou Dufu's younger brother.

If those rumors were true, then he truly had the right to loathe the Human race.

"She is also my wife."

Wang Zhice finally appeared, informing everyone of a shocking fact.

Chen Changsheng did not appear surprised, as he had speculated this long ago.

The Tang Old Master and Xu Yourong had known of this secret even earlier.

Tang Thirty-Six was astonished, asking, "Lord Wang, you like men?"

Wang Zhice explained, "She is a woman. Her maiden name is Chen'er."

Black Robe was a woman!

Chen Changsheng was more concerned with the relationship between Black Robe, Zhou Dufu, and Wang Zhice.

It was no wonder that Black Robe had possessed the Soul Pivot and was able to send Nanke and the other demon experts into the Garden of Zhou.

It was no wonder that Wang Zhice, despite his abilities, had always appeared to be in a rather intractable position whenever he encountered Black Robe.

"The descent of the Angel army from the Sacred Light Continent will result in us going extinct or becoming servants of that God. Will that make you happy?"

Wang Zhice stared into Black Robe's eyes and gravely asked.

"Yes, the worse off you are, the happier I'll be."

Black Robe took off her hood, revealing her true face. Her sickly green complexion was suffused with the aura of death, but her face was still indescribably beautiful.

She harshly said to Wang Zhice, "On the day all of you killed Big Brother, I swore an oath to exterminate the Human race! Xingshandong trusted in my hatred of the Human race, but he had no idea that the extermination of the demons was also in my plans. He thought I didn't know that he had also taken part!"

These simple words were not spoken in any sort of tearful voice, but the temperature in the hall seemed to drop.

If these words were true, then this was unquestionably the most shameful conspiracy in all of history.

The Human, Demon, and Demi-human races had mobilized all their Divine Domain experts and all their schemes, finally succeeding in killing the supreme expert under the starry sky.

One could discount the demons and demi-humans, but that the human experts had also participated in this conspiracy was truly unforgivable.

No matter how ruthless was Zhou Dufu's personality or awful his

reputation, or how many experts he killed or maimed in those hundreds of years of cultivation, he had still been the guardian of the Human race. If not for him, the demons would have broken through the walls of Luoyang many years ago and ruled over the continent. The Human race might have already been rendered extinct.

In the end, he had been callously sold out and killed.

"You should be exacting your revenge on Emperor Taizong or Lord Wang, but it shouldn't be us."

Chen Changsheng looked at Black Robe and said, "Because we've done nothing to offend you and your brother."

Black Robe did not expect him to still be so calm, and mocked, "So what? I'll just let the entire world accompany him in death."

With these words, that invisible string began to burn.

No one could see the flames, but they could sense the heat.

Chen Changsheng began to burn.

To be more precise, the Sacred Light in his blood and flesh began to burn.

It was a very special flame. It couldn't even ignite his clothes, but the light it exuded was exceptionally bright and gave off a divine aura.

Chen Changsheng looked less like a torch and more like a Night Pearl.

Zhizhi's eyes glowed as she said, "Let me eat him with one gulp!"

Xu Yourong shook her head.

Ignited by the demon flames, the Sacred Light began to undergo mystical transformations, and the light emitted was able to pass through solid objects.

If not even the Pope's Divine Robe or the roof of the Demon Hall

could block this strange light, neither would a dragon's body.

Chen Changsheng turned to look at the night sky, his expression solemn.

He sensed that the light had come.

Chapter 1176 – Light, Falling on Your Face

A point of light appeared in the abyss of the sea of stars.

It was an extremely faint light, probably originating from a place that was extremely far away.

Chen Changsheng naturally recalled those countless stars he saw on the night he fixed his Fated Star, reminiscent of the myriad twinkling lights of a city.

Across from this sea of stars was another sea of stars, and this point of light seemed to be in this other sea of stars.

This point of light was gradually brightening, meaning that the source of this light was approaching the observer.

The gradual brightening of this light meant that it was getting closer.

There was another possibility.

This was a beam of light being thrust at his eyes.

Chen Changsheng felt an incredible danger, because the point of light was brightening too quickly.

His sleeves began to flutter while countless images manifested before his eyes.

He sensed that his own little red fruit, his Fated Star floating outside the sea of stars, had suddenly begun to move.

That beam of light had still not reached this sea of stars, but its effects could already be felt.

Many people began to sense that their Fated Stars were being affected, were beginning to move, and the Demon Hall was filled with cries of shock.

"The constellations are changing!"

The demon scholars yelled as they looked up at the countless

stars in the night sky, acting like they had seen the end of the world.

.....

.....

Had the Sacred Light Continent begun its invasion?

The faint killing intent coming from the night sky made everyone incredibly nervous.

Only Black Robe calmly gazed at the night, a faint smile on her pale green face.

Ten years ago in the snowy mountains, Chen Changsheng had seen a similar sight, but he still could not remain calm, as tonight, this pillar of light was aimed at him.

There was a light drone, like the ringing of Sangharama Temple's bell. The dark clouds over Xuelao City frothed and scattered.

A beam of light fell on Chen Changsheng.

This light had pierced through the vast sea of stars, but when it landed, it had a circumference of only a few feet. One could imagine just how pure it was.

Only God could do something like this.

This pillar of light was suffused with the aura of destruction. It was silent and clear, a herald of the end-times.

But unlike the old Demon Lord, Chen Changsheng was not destroyed. He stood in the pillar of light, his body unharmed.

He soon understood why.

This light needed him alive.

Stimulated by the pillar of light, the Sacred Light in his body blazed even more fiercely. The endless light and heat it exuded formed a small mountain of flames that climbed to the night sky.

The flames climbed higher and higher, surpassing the Demon

Hall and soaring into the skies of Xuelao City.

The pillar of light grew even brighter, and golden liquid began to gush out from where it met the flames.

This golden liquid did not fall to the ground, but painted the night sky.

That part of the night sky gradually became as smooth as a mirror, gradually expanding until it occupied all the sky over the Demon Palace.

The pillar of light and the Sacred Light in Chen Changsheng's body were the bridge connecting the two continents, but what of the mirror? Was it a manifestation of that spatial crystal wall?

The powerful pressure from the other world caused space to deform and vortices to appear in the sky.

The distant Moon seemed rather flat in this distorted space.

Xuelao City was filled with wailing as the people ran out of the city. It was even more chaotic than when the human armies broke into the city.

Many deep cracks appeared on the ground and the Demon Hall collapsed. One could see stones floating in mid-air, granting the scene an exceptionally mystical flavor.

The mirror of light began to bulge outward, and as it probed out further, the outline within grew clearer and clearer. It was a face.

The surface of the mirror grew increasingly taut, increasingly bright, until finally, it became transparent. That face finally appeared.

This face was also devoid of emotion. It had an aquiline nose and extremely deep eyes. It could be described as perfect.

"Archangel..."

Wang Zhice's expression finally changed, his eyes fixed on that face as he muttered to himself.

Only a few people could hear his mutterings, and at this tense moment, there was no time to ponder about how he knew that this was the face of an Archangel.

As that indifferent face approached the ground, the mirror of light grew thinner and more transparent.

Countless gasps, mixed in with Black Robe's somewhat deranged laughter, came from within the Demon Hall as the crowd saw what was behind the mirror.

In the infinite darkness on the other side were several hundred Angels floating in the air, their white wings a stark contrast against the black.

Everyone who saw this was stunned, and then afraid.

Not everyone was afraid of them. To Xiao Zhang, these Angels were mere moths.

To him, the fear came from that distant pressure, that gaze.

There were no eyes, but it was obvious that some existence that transcended physical existence was currently observing the world they resided in.

Was that God?

.....

.....

The Angels seemed to already be over Xuelao City, but in reality, they were still tens of thousands of li from the Central Continent, and this was perhaps a gross underestimate of the distance.

Time-wise, all the intelligent beings on the Central Continent, whether human, demon, or demi-human, had enough time to write a final will and testament.

When the Angel army descended down the pillar of light and melded with the statues in the demon flames, this world would meet its end.

"Does Sir have any solutions?"

Xu Yourong aimed this question at Wang Zhice.

When everyone's gazes were focused on the pillar of light and Chen Changsheng, she had been watching Wang Zhice.

She firmly believed that there was a reason this legendary individual had appeared in the Demon Palace.

She had noticed a certain detail—that Wang Zhice had easily recognized the face of the Archangel—which bolstered her confidence.

But Wang Zhice's answer was unable to satisfy her.

"I'm still thinking."

'Thinking' could mean 'observation', and it could also mean 'waiting'.

Watching Chen Changsheng in the pillar of light, Tang Thirty-Six was in no mood to think about those hidden meanings. He sneered, "Then what did you come here for? To watch a play?"

Xu Yourong looked away, tilting her head as she gazed at that mirror of light in the sky.

Chen Changsheng noticed her movements and thought to himself, how cute. I really haven't seen her like this much in the last few years.

Xu Yourong thought for a while and decided not to wait for Wang Zhice. She turned to Black Robe and said, "I can stop you."

Black Robe's lips curled as she jeered, "Is that so?"

It was clear that she did not believe in Xu Yourong's words, just like how Xiao Zhang did not believe in the Demon Lord's. She took them to be empty threats.

Chen Changsheng added, "I also can, because the method is very simple."

Black Robe arched her brows. "Is that so? Then what are you prepared to do?"

"Just killing me will do it."

"Just killing him will do it."

Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong spoke at the same time.

And then they looked at each other.

Chen Changsheng smiled.

Xu Yourong did not.

All was quiet. The only sound was the flowing of the demon flames.

Everyone's eyes were focused on Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong.

Black Robe stared at them, her eyes turning cold.

This was the answer, the only solution.

She had not expected Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong to so quickly and calmly reach this conclusion.

"Before Shang Xingzhou died, he told me that if something happened, I should just kill you."

Xu Yourong calmly looked at Chen Changsheng and said, "My apologies for not telling you of this matter beforehand."

Chapter 1177 – Her Answer

It turns out that Master expected this all along.

Chen Changsheng was somewhat emotional.

No wonder his master had said in their last conversation that no matter what Black Robe was thinking, she would never succeed.

While Chen Changsheng was getting emotional, Black Robe was wearing a nasty expression, and the eyes of everyone else had extremely complicated expressions.

On the other hand, the Demon Lord's gaze toward Xu Yourong was growing increasingly passionate and reverential.

Did they really have to kill Chen Changsheng?

Why had Shang Xingzhou given Xu Yourong this mission?

"Why?"

Black Robe asked, "Are the two of you not Daoist companions?"

Chen Changsheng and Xu Yourong truly were Daoist companions, the most famous pair of Daoist companions in the continent. Everyone knew that they were a perfect match for each other.

But Shang Xingzhou firmly believed that she could kill her lover, calmly and determinedly.

If Chen Changsheng realized the answer and was not willing to die, Xu Yourong would be the best executor.

No one, not even Chen Changsheng, would expect her to kill him.

For Shang Xingzhou to predict this and to dare make her the executor was truly extraordinary.

Of course, the most extraordinary was still Xu Yourong.

.....

.....

"Do you still remember the conversation we had ten years ago outside White Emperor City?"

Xu Yourong looked at Chen Changsheng and asked.

Chen Changsheng had found the answer and calmly accepted it, so she naturally did not need to play the part of executor.

They seemed to have spoken simultaneously, but she had actually been just a little slower.

Chen Changsheng remembered what she had said.

"If your wife treated you extremely well but had a poor personality, or was an evil and wicked person, what would you do?"

Bie Yanghong had been the one who had brought up this question.

Chen Changsheng's answer was that he would advise his wife to stop, would stop her from committing evil, would stand guard at her side for the rest of his life.

This was actually rather similar to Wang Zhice's answer.

Tang Thirty-Six's answer was very straightforward: 'Why should I stop them? Isn't it quite pleasant to be big villains together?'

Xu Yourong's answer had been as fierce as the west wind blowing outside the city.

"I would kill him, then follow him in death."

.....

.....

Chen Changsheng was not an evil and wicked person.

But tonight's circumstances were somewhat similar to the situation in that question.

Chen Changsheng knew what she meant and very seriously declared, "I don't want it."

Xu Yourong answered, "I want it."

If any other woman said this, she would just seem like she was throwing a tantrum or was peeved.

She really was throwing a tantrum, and she was also rather peeved, but she was too calm for anyone to believe this.

Chen Changsheng looked into her eyes and said, "My death is enough. There's no need for you to die."

Xu Yourong replied, "I don't want to fool you. Once you die, who can stop me?"

Chen Changsheng thought this over and replied, "That's reasonable. Then let's do it together."

There was no sorrow, or passion, or tears.

Calmly, they had declared that they would die together.

Ye Xiaolian silently wept.

Zhizhi was fuming.

The rest of the crowd felt respect.

The Pope and Holy Maiden were truly extraordinary people.

Only two people had very intense reactions.

Tang Thirty-Six angrily roared, "The two of you are idiots! It's not even the final moment yet, so why are you playing the part of a tragic couple!"

Black Robe harshly shouted, "Do it! Kill each other! I don't believe that you can really pull it off!"

"I'm not an idiot, and I'm naturally in no rush to do the deed. I'm just telling you that your plan can fail at any time."

Xu Yourong used her words to reply to both people, and then she

turned to Wang Zhice and said, "You can still think for a while."

Wang Zhice had been observing and waiting this entire time.

Before those changes he was waiting for had occurred, he observed, to his surprise, a few problems.

That spatial path between the two continents was clearly rather unstable.

There was no problem with the pillar of light from the Sacred Light Continent. Even in his several hundred years of observation within Sangharama Temple, he had never seen such a pure energy.

The problem was with Chen Changsheng's body. The energy of the burning Sacred Light seemed to be a little less than expected.

Of course, this was a good thing.

Black Robe had also noticed this problem.

She was shocked and unable to understand why.

She was well aware of how many sacrifices that Pontifex Maximus of the other race had needed to make the fruit of Chen Changsheng, how much Sacred Light had been poured in.

On an individual level, one could even say that his body contained an infinite amount of Sacred Light.

Even if Chen Changsheng had suffered many injuries over these last few years and bled a great deal of Sacred Light, as well as consumed a great deal, that was not even one-ten-thousandth of the sum total.

How was his body now missing so much Sacred Light that even the spatial path had become unstable?

More and more people began to notice this problem.

And then many people realized the answer.

Black Robe also realized it.

In these last few years, Chen Changsheng had refined many

Cinnabar Pills, shedding a great deal of blood every month.

This blood was rich with the energy of Sacred Light, which is why his believers called it divine blood.

Black Robe had an extremely nasty expression. Taking out her metal plate, she closed her eyes and began to calculate.

At the same time, Xu Yourong took out her Fated Star Plate and began to calculate.

The atmosphere became even more tense.

Several dozen gazes moved back and forth between Black Robe and Xu Yourong.

In terms of calculation and predictions, these two women were unquestionably the best in the world.

After a short while, Black Robe opened her eyes, a relieved smile appearing on her face.

After a few moments, Xu Yourong opened her eyes and tiredly shook her head.

The crowd could see what the result was.

"The spatial path truly is rather unstable, but it can last until the Angel army comes over."

Black Robe stared into Xu Yourong's eyes like she was an old witch staring at an apple. Giggling, she said, "So you will still have to kill him."

Tang Thirty-Six did not understand, nor could Xiao Zhang, Linghai Zhiwang, or the rest. If Chen Changsheng died, the spatial path would be severed, and Black Robe's lifelong wish would meet with defeat. Should she not be very nervous? Why did she seem more concerned over whether Xu Yourong would kill Chen Changsheng?

Only Xu Yourong, Ye Xiaolian, and Zhizhi understood, and Nanke had a vague inkling. This was because they were all women.

"You or me?"

Xu Yourong asked.

"I'll do it."

Chen Changsheng replied.

Swooshswooshswooshswoosh!

Countless swords flew through the air.

White vortices appeared in the sky.

Three thousand swords flew into the air and then returned like swallows. They hovered in the surroundings like a paused downpour.

The South Stream Temple sword array had been formed.

Chen Changsheng stood within.

He had fought many battles this way.

But tonight, all these swords were reversed, their sharp tips pointed at him.

Chen Changsheng closed his eyes.

The three thousands vibrated and buzzed as if struggling.

He had been of one mind with this storm of swords ever since he had taken them out of the Sword Pool. This was the first time such a thing had ever happened.

The swords had received his will, but they were not willing to follow his orders.

But in the end, they were his swords.

Swooshswooshswooshswoosh!

The three thousand swords dropped down from the night sky, a torrential rain aimed at Chen Changsheng!

Tang Thirty-Six's face paled.

Ye Xiaolian's hands tightly covered her mouth.

The cinnabar birthmark between the little Black Dragon's eyes was incomparably red, her vertical pupils raging with fury.

And yet, Xu Yourong was still not looking at him.

She was still looking at Wang Zhice.

Wang Zhice finally moved.

His sleeve ruffled.

But he did not raise his left hand. Instead, he let out a soft shout.

Everyone, including him, had just seen something inconceivable.

Those swords suddenly stopped right as they were about to land, halting in the air.

Time seemed to have stopped.

Chapter 1178 – One Sword Rises from the Earth

When time stopped, everything in the world would come to a stop.

Even the several hundred Angels on the other side of the crystal wall slowly descending down the pillar of light came to a halt.

As the light filtered through their wings, it transformed into countless thin and gorgeous threads.

Chen Changsheng could be said to be the person who had pondered death the most. Before that night in the Mausoleum of Books, he had spent every moment of his life in the shadow of death. Although he had later on gained his freedom, when it was necessary, he could quickly return to that state and easily make the necessary decision.

When the three thousand swords were flying back from the night sky and on the verge of piercing his body, he really did think he was dead.

Mentally, he was dead, but physically, he was still alive.

A very thin line separated life and death. One existed in a very mysterious state on that line. One could regard it as a state of both life and death, or as a state that consisted of neither.

It was actually not difficult to enter this mysterious state. Perhaps every living being would enter this state at least once at the end of their life.

The problem was that once living beings entered this state, they could no longer return to the state of living. They could only proceed forward, into the infinite abyss or that realm above the sea of stars.

Only in the most extreme of situations could there be exceptions.

Tonight was such a case.

Those swords were all Chen Changsheng's swords, of one mind with him. One could even say that they lived and died together with him.

So when Chen Changsheng entered this state, those swords naturally came to a stop.

Thus, he and the storm of swords entered a relatively stable and incredibly sensitive state. Even time temporarily came to a stop.

In the next moment, no one knew if he would be dead or alive.

The halted world became a painting, or a curtain.

Suddenly, Chen Changsheng opened his eyes.

His eyes were as clean and bright as a mirror. They could reflect all the details of the world in astonishing abundance.

In the abyss on the other side of the demon flames, on those pitch-black cliffs, a luxuriantly green blade of grass suddenly sprouted.

Time began to move, and the world began to come to life. Countless exclamations of surprise quickly fell into absolute silence.

The crowd had sensed that something had happened with Chen Changsheng.

The Tang Old Master and Wang Zhice had an even more direct and precise understanding of what this was, because they had undergone similar experiences.

Black Robe's face twisted.

They had seen the strength of laws on Chen Changsheng's body.

Chen Changsheng had not completely understood these laws, and he certainly had not surpassed them.

But these were the laws of life and death, under the scope of time.

Comprehending only one percent of them was enough.

Enough to do what?

Chen Changsheng looked up at the night sky.

The three thousand swords moved according to his gaze, howling through the sky and into the pillar of light.

This pillar of light was only a few feet wide. Once the three thousand swords had entered, the pillar of light seemed a little packed, like thousands of carp were swimming through a narrow river.

The swords incessantly trembled against the torrent of the light, but they did not stop. They bravely swam against the flow, seemingly ready to transform into a dragon.

The clash of sword and light created countless flecks of light that rained down from the sky like lava, making Xuelao City incomparably bright.

At this sight, the crowd's speculations were confirmed, and they were so stunned that they couldn't speak.

An envious expression appeared on the Demon Lord's face.

Seated on the wheelchair, Tang Thirty-Six excitedly slapped his thigh as he cheered on, "Awesome! Awesome!"

It truly was awesome.

In the space between the closing and opening of his eyes, Chen Changsheng had crossed over that threshold and walked into that landscape.

That landscape was the Domain of the Divine.

Had there ever been such a young Divine Domain expert?

How old had Chen Xuanba been when he broke into the Divine?

No one knew the exact answer, but no one was concerned about this question.

The first task Chen Changsheng had set out on upon entering the Divine Domain was cleaving apart that pillar of light from the Sacred Light Continent. Would he be able to do it?

"You think that this is enough? Too naive! If that were possible, do you think Wang Zhice would still be standing there?"

Black Robe stared at Chen Changsheng and shouted.

Her voice had become extremely shrill and was no longer so pleasant to the ear. Perhaps this was indicative of her current mood.

But her words seemed to be correct.

That pillar of light was truly too strong. The three thousand swords were bravely pressing forward, their vibrations more and more intense. They seemed like dried-up leaves about to fall from a tree branch.

No one could help him—not the Tang Old Master, Wang Zhice, Wang Po, or Xiao Zhang.

The other end of this pillar of light was in his body. Breaking this pillar of light was tantamount to breaking his connection to the Sacred Light Continent.

From a certain perspective, this was a battle with himself.

Thus, this was naturally a battle that only he could fight.

Chen Changsheng ignored Black Robe. He calmly and attentively watched the pillar of light, his gaze penetrating through those swords and falling on that mirror of light that was the spatial crystal wall.

As the light grew brighter and brighter, he squinted and raised his left hand.

Five stone pearls hung around his wrist, each one of them a Heavenly Tome Monolith.

Xu Yourong thought that he was using the Heavenly Tome

Monoliths against his enemy and was prepared to give him her five Heavenly Tome Monoliths, but she realized that it was not his intent.

Five Heavenly Tome Monoliths appeared in the Demon Hall. They did not form an array, and they did not cut off Chen Changsheng from the outside world. They seemed to have been casually placed.

To be more precise, four of the Heavenly Tome Monoliths had been casually placed, but the position of the final Heavenly Tome Monolith had clearly been chosen. It was next to his right hand.

Wang Zhice was very familiar with this Heavenly Tome Monolith, because this was the one he had placed in the Lingyan Pavilion.

He did not know what Chen Changsheng was going to do.

Nobody knew, not even Xu Yourong.

Zhizhi sensed the summons in her sea of consciousness. She walked up to Chen Changsheng's side, perplexity on her face as she wondered what was going on.

After he did these things, Chen Changsheng's right hand gripped the hilt of his sword.

No one knew what Chen Changsheng intended to do, nor could they sense anything. Even more shocking was that the Archangel on the other side of that transparent mirror of light, still millions of li from the Central Continent, seemed to sense an intense danger. Wariness appeared on that blank and indifferent face as it began to retreat.

"Are you ready?"

No one understood who Chen Changsheng was asking this question to.

Luoluo's somewhat doubtful voice suddenly rose from the

Heavenly Tome Monolith by his right hand. "Teacher, is that you? Is there something wrong?"

Chen Changsheng replied, "It's nothing. It's fine as long as you're here."

He unsheathed the Stainless Sword and slashed at the night sky.

An awe-inspiring sword intent rose.

The morale of the three thousand swords was roused and they roared back to life. They surged to the end of the pillar of light, an unending stream of swords that then became one single, massive sword.

This sword was truly massive. It stretched from the Demon Palace on the ground to the vault of the night sky, linking the heavens and the earth!

Chen Changsheng wanted to use this giant sword to hack down the pillar of light!

That sense of indifferent observation from high above once more appeared in everyone's minds.

Everyone guessed that this was probably that God once more opening its eyes, even though it might not even have eyes.

It seemed like this sword of Chen Changsheng's threatened the descent of the Angel army.

An indescribable pressure descended from that distant world, passing through the crystal wall and landing on that massive sword.

The sky resounded with the grating and bending of metal.

Chen Changsheng's face paled, but his eyes grew even calmer.

Zhizhi blankly stared at him, not knowing what she should do.

Luoluo's anxious voice came out of the Heavenly Tome Monolith. "Teacher! Teacher! Are you okay? Say something!"

The grating and bending sounds gradually faded.

The massive sword continued to resist the descending pillar of light!

Chen Changsheng had held fast!

What a powerful sword!

This was basically on the same level as Su Li's slash on the snowy plains that had cleaved a path through the demon army!

No matter how much of a grandmaster Chen Changsheng was in the sword, he was still young, and he had just broken into the Divine, so how could he possibly exhibit such a powerful attack?

No one could understand.

Wang Zhice suddenly recalled an extremely ancient scripture and fell into deep thought.

He turned to the confused Zhizhi standing outside the pillar of light and silently thought, This is the Azure Dragon.

And then he turned to the black monolith and thought, This is the White Tiger.

Finally, he turned to Xu Yourong and thought, This is the Phoenix.

In terms of position, she and Chen Changsheng were some distance from each other. She did not seem to occupy any special place.

The Azure Dragon to the left, the White Tiger to the right, and the Phoenix... in the heart.

Wang Zhice's eyes glimmered as he sighed, "Impressive."

A sword that even he felt sincere admiration for was naturally a most impressive sword.

But this sword could still only reach a stalemate with that pillar of light from the Sacred Light Continent.

Two unimaginably powerful Qis, separated by millions of li, were battling in space.

"You cannot succeed! That's immaterial light! How can you sever it!"

Black Robe stared at Chen Changsheng's face and shrieked, "Not unless your true body is millions of li away and able to cut off the source of that pillar of light!"

At times, a sentence that turned out to be prophecy only happened because the process of calculation and conjecture was concealed.

Black Robe was a master of calculation and conjecture.

When she said those words, it was highly likely that she was subconsciously most afraid that such a thing would actually happen, though not even she had noticed this.

Thus, it really did happen.

A sword glow flashed across the night sky.

Chapter 1179 – One Sword Comes from the Heavens

It was an extremely faint sword glow, the trail left behind by a falling leaf in the wind. Without staring, one wouldn't even be able to see it.

With a light swish, an extremely thin sword slash was drawn in the night sky.

This sword slash was on the other side of the mirror of light.

When a hole was cut in a wine bag, wine would begin spilling out.

Golden liquid gushed like a waterfall onto the other side of the mirror of light, and the mirror began to shrink.

This meant that the crystal wall was beginning to restabilize, that the path was disappearing.

The pillar of light was still connecting the two worlds.

The Archangel floated into the distance, its thin lips slightly parting as it noiselessly spoke.

With a clack, the distant end of the pillar of light was suddenly cut in the middle. Like an iceberg, it slowly slid down the smooth cut.

Half of the pillar of light dropped into the void, gradually drifting away, disappearing into space.

It was hard to say if that Archangel and the several dozen fastest Angels with it would be able to survive the turbulent flow of space.

It was the two-hundred-some Angels behind them who were the worst off.

Since part of the pillar of light had been cut off and was now drifting away, the Angels would suffer spatial displacement.

Even Angels, with their incredibly tough bodies, were hard-pressed to resist spatial displacement, and their bodies were cut open.

Golden blood splashed all over that distant space, blazing flowers of gold.

The people on the ground could not hear what those Angels were shouting, but their twisted expressions clearly communicated their pain.

A thunderous hum droned through the sky.

This hum was bursting with majesty, anger, and cool indifference.

A lightning bolt seared through the night sky, accurately striking that massive sword.

With a whoosh, the massive sword broke apart, transforming back into three thousand swords that rained down to the ground.

Chen Changsheng raised his sheath.

The three thousand swords swiftly returned to the sheath, many of the swords still bearing marks from that white lightning bolt.

Chen Changsheng's complexion turned paler and paler until finally, he vomited out a mouthful of blood.

Fortunately, there was no second lightning bolt, and that low hum did not continue.

The spatial path in the night sky had already vanished, as had the pillar of light.

Not even God was omnipotent.

All was still.

The golden mirror of light had shattered into countless shards that now drifted to the ground like fireworks.

With how slowly those flecks of light were drifting, Xuelao City

could be as bright as day for the rest of the night.

Other than these flecks of light, nothing remained of that battle. It was like that pillar of light and army of Angels had all been fake.

Everyone had just been experiencing the same dream.

"Look, stars on that side are burning."

A young voice suddenly spoke.

The young Daoist boy in Ye Xiaolian's embrace pointed at a place in the night sky.

The pillar of light had caused the positions of the stars to subtly shift, but that star was still located in the Southern Cross and was easy to see.

But there was no star burning there.

Wang Zhice and the Tang Old Master glanced at each other and saw what the other was thinking.

Shang Xingzhou's skill in choosing students was truly the best in the world.

Wang Po and Xiao Zhang sensed it, and soon after, Chen Changsheng also sensed it.

In the incomparably distant other side, in that other sea of stars, stars were burning.

An elusive sword intent flickered around those blazing stars.

More and more people began to sense that sword intent, even though they couldn't see those burning stars.

Not even God could pass through those millions of li, so why were they able to so clearly sense that sword intent?

Because that sword intent belonged to this place.

It was by the same principle that the Sacred Light Continent could sense the Sacred Light in Chen Changsheng's body.

"This is quite the arrogant sword. No wonder everyone says I'm similar to him."

Tang Thirty-Six's brows flew upward in pride.

"What's going on here? How could the Heaven Shrouding Sword be there!"

Black Robe stared at the night sky, shrilly shouting as she sensed that distant elusive sword intent, verging on hysteria.

"You believed that you could calculate all things, predict everything that could happen in the world, but you did not predict that His Holiness the Pope would break into the Divine, and you didn't predict that someone had already ventured above the starry sky many years ago. He might have been arrogantly living a life on the Sacred Light Continent, or he might have been silently watching, waiting to deliver the crucial strike at the crucial moment."

The Tang Old Master looked at Black Robe and finished, "And that person was someone I spent money raising."

Everyone had already guessed whose handiwork that sword intent was, and Black Robe's shouts and the Tang Old Master's words confirmed it.

It had to be Su Li.

Wang Po faintly smiled, saying nothing.

Based on what the Tang Old Master had just said, if the Tang clan had spent money raising Su Li, he probably counted as well, given all the years he had spent as an accountant in Wenshui City.

This probably wasn't the truth, or at least not the whole truth. One just needed to think about the long-deceased Tang Second Master to know this.

The Tang Old Master knew, but he knew that given Wang Po's personality, he wouldn't deny it.

Su Li would definitely deny it and might even follow up with a stream of curses, but whose fault was it that he wasn't here?

Tang Thirty-Six's face felt a little hot, and he wondered if he had piled too many blankets onto the wheelchair.

If even his face felt a little hot, one could imagine just how shameless the Tang Old Master was being in his attempt to freeload off Su Li's merit.

But given how important this moment in history was, once this conversation began to spread, the Tang clan would probably be secure for the next one thousand years.

To the Tang Old Master, this was a chance that could not be missed. After all, he was still fundamentally a merchant.

Besides Chen Changsheng's breaking into the Divine, Su Li's sword, and the Tang Old Master's shamelessness, there was one other thing that Black Robe had not predicted.

The spatial path formed tonight had been particularly unstable.

It was not Su Li's sword that had caused the Angel army from the Sacred Light Continent to be almost completely destroyed.

Su Li's sword at its strongest could not possibly be this strong, but his sword had succeeded in severing the pillar of light and causing spatial displacement.

The power of space was equal to time's and almost impossible to resist. One by one, those Angels died miserable deaths.

In her calculations, the spatial path should have been very sturdy. Even if Chen Changsheng broke into the Divine and Su Li's sword came from the heavens, it should have been impossible to break the path.

The reason for the spatial path's weakness was that Chen Changsheng's body had lost a large quantity of Sacred Light.

In the last ten years, Chen Changsheng had constantly been using

his blood to refine Cinnabar Pills, even if this was extremely taxing on him and prevented him from advancing in cultivation.

Nobody had expected it to lead to this result.

It seemed that good people truly were rewarded with good.

Many gazes, filled with respect, fell on Chen Changsheng.

Chen Changsheng's gaze was on the small carriage standing at the edge of the crowd.

"Master, did you already predict all these things?

"Did you already make that medicine long before, but still let me constantly make Cinnabar Pills?

"And also, did you always want to kill me because of what happened tonight?"

Chen Changsheng knew that he might be thinking too much, that these conjectures might only serve to embellish the reputation of the deceased, but he still couldn't help himself.

In this way, he could more easily convince himself that his master liked him but had been compelled by more important concerns into his actions.

These questions had no answer. No one knew what Shang Xingzhou had actually been thinking.

Similarly, no one knew what Black Robe was thinking right now.

All her schemes had failed, her lifelong desires been destroyed in one night. Anyone would crumble in the face of such an onslaught.

She stood there, long since numb from despair. She even seemed to be devoid of life.

Wang Zhice walked up to her and took her hand. "Don't be like this in the future."

After saying this, he nodded to the Tang Old Master and Chen Changsheng, and made to take Black Robe with him out of the hall.

Black Robe's head was bowed and she was incredibly obedient. She was now a naughty child being brought home by her parents.

The Demon Hall was abnormally quiet.

Linghai Zhiwang and the others looked to Chen Changsheng.

Chen Changsheng stood on the stone steps in deep thought.

The white paper on Xiao Zhang's face flapped, though it was hard to say if this was because of heavy breathing or something else.

Wang Po looked at his feet, his thoughts inscrutable.

The Tang Old Master's eyes were closed as if he was asleep.

A voice finally broke the silence.

"Hold on."

Tang Thirty-Six looked at Wang Zhice and calmly asked, "Lord Wang, what do you mean by this?"

Chen Changsheng's eyes focused.

Xiao Zhang let out a strange shout.

Wang Po raised his head.

The Tang Old Master opened his eyes.

They all looked toward Wang Zhice.

This was their stance.

"She is my wife, and... the Human race truly does owe these siblings too much."

Wang Zhice said to the crowd, "I've already crippled her cultivation. She will spend her future in Sangharama Temple, quietly cultivating and repenting for her sins. I will not allow her to meddle in the human world again."

Individuals like the Tang Old Master and Wang Po could naturally tell that when Wang Zhice took Black Robe's hand, he had crippled her cultivation.

The crowd didn't know what to do. Wang Zhice's stance was clear and sincere, and he seemed to have abundant reason.

More importantly, he was Wang Zhice.

Divine General He Ming and the other generals, and even Daoist Siyuan and Archbishop An Lin, felt like this was okay.

"No."

Xu Yourong's voice was calm and firm.

Tang Thirty-Six said, "The ones who owe these siblings are you, Emperor Taizong, and those people in the Lingyan Pavilion, but not us. We're still very young and haven't done too many repulsive deeds. For what reason should we have to bear your mistakes?"

Zhizhi hid behind Chen Changsheng and said, "A trickster like you with a mouth full of lies is impossible to trust. Who knows? You might let your wife go the moment you leave the city."

Wang Zhice ignored them. He looked only at Chen Changsheng and asked, "If you were in my position, what would you do?"

Chen Changsheng finally spoke.

"In White Emperor City, Senior Bie Yanghong asked me a question. We mentioned it a moment ago, and now that I think about it, this question is very appropriate for Sir."

He continued, "We've already given the answer, but Sir pretended to not see."

Just a moment ago, Xu Yourong had been prepared to kill him and then commit suicide.

His answer was: 'If you truly feel like you owe Zhou Dufu and his sister, you should do as we did.'

The Demon Hall became even quieter, colder.

"Who can keep someone that I want to take away?"

Wang Zhice's voice was still calm, his tone still gentle, but

everyone felt his pressure.

After several hundred years of wind and rain, the Tang Old Master was the only one left who had witnessed Wang Zhice's past demeanor, but who would dare underestimate him?

There was no need for any reason. His name was enough.

He was Wang Zhice.

In Mount Han, he appeared and the Demon Lord retreated. On the snowy plains, he appeared and the Demon Commander remained silent.

And this wasn't even taking into account what had happened just now.

Even if Black Robe had been heavily wounded by the Frost God Spear, even if her mind was in shambles, just who in the world could cripple Black Robe's cultivation by just taking her hand?

No one present was a match for him.

Xu Yourong was well aware that Wang Zhice had been holding something back tonight, so she had not moved.

She even believed that even if Chen Changsheng and Su Li had failed to sever the spatial path, Wang Zhice still had other methods.

Wang Zhice's strength was truly unfathomable.

It was just like he had said.

Who could keep someone that he wanted to take away?

"I want to try."

With this declaration, Wang Po stepped forward.

Ten-some years ago, a storm engulfed Xunyang City. Wang Po then had been a world-famous expert, but he was far weaker than his current self.

The him from that time had dared to wield his blade at Zhu Luo

for the sake of Su Li, who he didn't even like.

Why would he be any different now?

There had been another present in that storm of Xunyang City.

Chen Changsheng declared, "I also want to try."

As the words left his mouth, clear light illuminated the dark hall. Several treasures flew into the sky, exuding a sacred and powerful Qi.

Star Core, Gloom Willow, Mountain River Map, Universe Stamp, Falling Star Stone, Light Pestle.

The array of the Li Palace was formed.

The Orthodoxy's Divine Staff once more appeared in Tang Thirty-Six's hand.

"This world is formed by countless living beings. They are not cold stones that can become chess pieces or toys in your games."

He said to Wang Zhice, "Sir should show some more respect for all those living beings that died because of your wife."

Crippling her cultivation and imprisoning her in a temple for the rest of her life was not enough.

The meaning of 'more respect' was: life for life.

Hugging the Frost God Spear, Xiao Zhang stepped forward.

The Tang Old Master impassively looked on.

Chapter 1180 – The Death of Black Robe

A smile of self-mockery appeared on Wang Zhice's lips, a hint of sorrow in his eyes.

On the night that Xuelao City had been broken, right after the threat of an invasion from the Sacred Light Continent had been resolved, he was now confronting an assault from four of humanity's Divine Domain experts.

"In Sir's view, this is probably a very sad affair, and so it is for me."

Chen Changsheng continued, "I have read Sir's notebook, and read many books about Sir. I truly hoped that I would not see Sir tonight, as only this way could you still remain a legend in my heart."

Wang Zhice released Black Robe's hands and walked down the steps. Calmly regarding the crowd, he said, "My apologies."

A voice suddenly broke the tension.

"I say... Can everybody just be a little bit more respectful to me? This is my home."

The Demon Lord took two steps forward and said, "Shouldn't I be the tragic hero tonight?"

Tang Thirty-Six thought of those letters and smiled. "Tragedies often originate from the ugly. You're still young and can't be considered ugly."

"I'll take that as a compliment."

After earnestly replying to Tang Thirty-Six, the Demon Lord turned to Black Robe and affectionately asked, "Are you truly intending to leave with this man?"

Black Robe slightly lowered her head as a miserable smile appeared on her face. Although her complexion was still that

bizarre green, it still had a bewitching beauty.

The Demon Lord's eyes suddenly blazed. "I will not let you leave!"

Wind suddenly stirred. Without even seeming to move, Wang Zhice appeared back on the steps, his hand clasped around the Demon Lord's throat.

A magical artifact dropped to the Demon Lord's feet, shattering into powder.

He had been aiming this demon artifact at Black Robe just now, but before he could strike, Wang Zhice had seized him.

The Demon Lord's face was red and he almost couldn't breathe, but he was madly laughing.

Wang Zhice slowly released his hand, his complexion paling.

Black Robe toppled to the floor, already dead.

An ordinary sword had run through her body, destroying her Ethereal Palace.

A blue-clothed man gripped the sword.

This man had been concealed in the Demon Lord's shadow this entire time, waiting for the chance presented just now to suddenly strike.

Even though he had the Demon Lord's help, even though Wang Zhice's attention was focused on Wang Po and the others, it was no easy feat to kill someone in front of Wang Zhice. The blue-clothed man was certainly no ordinary assassin.

He was the world's number one assassin, Liu Qing.

Chen Changsheng and Wang Po glanced at each other.

All three of the people from Xunyang City's storm were present.

.....

.....

Just like that, Black Robe died.

Wang Zhice quietly stood in front of her, lost in thought.

In the end, he did nothing.

He hugged Black Robe's corpse and walked out of the Demon Hall, quickly vanishing from sight.

Tang Thirty-Six said to the Demon Lord, "Thanks."

The Demon Lord replied, "I said that I loved her. I can't share a birthday with her, so at least I can share a deathday."

Tang Thirty-Six said, "I can't stand you all."

The Demon Lord faintly smiled. "You won't have to in the future. Goodbye."

Chen Changsheng sincerely said, "Have a good journey."

Tang Thirty-Six struggled out of his wheelchair and said, "Take care."

Walking into the dark demon flames, the Demon Lord's body gradually returned to the void.

At the final moment, his face still had that smile: content, strange, and ambiguous.

.....

.....

Snow was falling, drifting chaotically across the night sky.

Those flecks of light were still drifting about the night sky like fireworks.

Wang Zhice left Xuelao City, holding Black Robe's body.

It was half a city of fireworks, half a city of snow.

On a distant snowy hill, a Black Goat quietly looked on.

.....

.....

Night would eventually pass. Dawn would inevitably come.

The rebel army was finally defeated, and fled the capital. The North-Pacifying Army joined with the Imperial Guard and began the pursuit.

Xuanyuan Po passed his authority to the human commander and stayed in the Orthodox Academy.

A night of bitter fighting had left even someone like him, half a step from the Divine, with many wounds. When he had been surrounded by the experts of the Tianhai clan, a large wound had been hacked out of his arm. At the time, his blood had flowed out like a waterfall, and even he felt it strange that he even now was not dizzy.

Of course, those Tianhai clan experts had all died to his metal sword.

When he thought about how it was precisely Tianhai Ya'er who had crippled him in the Ivy Festival all those years ago, it was hard for Xuanyuan Po to not feel somewhat emotional.

He knew that Tianhai Ya'er had died three years ago. Apparently, it had been from depression.

Entering the Orthodox Academy, he was greeted by the respectful gazes of the teachers and students, which made him rather uncomfortable.

The teachers and students of the Orthodox Academy were clearly treating him as a stranger.

But he was an old hand of the Orthodox Academy, had even held a position here.

The area around the library was much quieter, and that short wall had been dismantled. The small house remained in its original state. Other than Su Moyu, no other teacher or student was

permitted to live within.

Those rooms were left for Zhexiu, Tang Thirty-Six, Chen Changsheng, and him.

There were many trees in front of the house, and there were more large trees here than in the forest near the Imperial Palace.

Xuanyuan Po felt both nostalgic and regretful.

In the past, he would often ram into the trees in that forest, but he didn't dare to now. A casual strike would cause the thickest tree to snap.

He walked to the opposite shore of the lake and saw that most familiar of buildings: the kitchen.

The kitchen from back then had been destroyed by Wuqiong Bi. This one had been built later on, but it was no different from its predecessor.

Xuanyuan Po walked into the kitchen. The pans, bowls, ladles, and pots made him think about how Chen Changsheng often demanded that he use less salt and oil, and then he felt like his mouth was so bereft of taste that a bird was about to come out of it. He then recalled how Tang Thirty-Six had eaten steamed blue lobster over rice many times, at which point he began to drool.

There was nothing to eat in the kitchen. It seemed like it was not used very often. Xuanyuan Po felt that this was rather unfortunate.

Before leaving, he quietly examined the neat pile of firewood for a while and then thrust his sword inside.

Many years ago, when he was cooking in this kitchen, he had developed this habit.

But today, he had no intention of retrieving the sword, because he wanted to learn from Tang Thirty-Six and Chen Changsheng.

Several decades later, maybe even several centuries, a new student of the Orthodox Academy being bullied would discover

this sword. What sort of story would happen then?

Xuanyuan Po awaited this moment with great anticipation.

Upon hearing of this matter, Luoluo was also very interested and began to laugh.

The laughter quickly stopped. Her mood was not very good.

Last night had been very long. First her martial uncle the emperor had transformed into a sun. After that, her teacher had communicated with her from Xuelao City, asking her not to rashly move.

Just what had happened in Xuelao City? Since her martial uncle the emperor was so formidable, what could they still do in the capital?

"Was what we did meaningless?"

She stood on the great banyan tree and seriously asked Xuanyuan Po this question.

Xuanyuan Po was standing under the tree and was worried that the princess would fall. "Your Highness, it's been ten-some years since you've climbed this tree. Be careful not to slip."

Luoluo grimaced and then smoothly jumped over a forking branch. Walking to the end of the branch, she looked down into the lake.

Trees would grow, but their shape would not change too much.

"Principal said that the process is more important than the end, so I think... that our coming to the capital naturally has meaning."

Xuanyuan Po paused for a moment, then added, "I actually don't understand what these words mean."

"You really are a stupid black bear."

Luoluo noted.

Xuanyuan Po thought inwardly, if it weren't Your Highness but

Tang Thirty-Six instead, I definitely wouldn't let this go.

Luoluo explained, "Teacher's meaning is very simple. We will all die, so our ends are foreordained. Thus, it's the process that's important."

Xuanyuan Po contemplated these words for a while. "These words do seem very reasonable."

Luoluo peered down into the lake and saw an extremely fat koi, though she didn't know if it was the one from back then.

The fat koi was slowly sinking to the bottom of the lake.

Suddenly, it waved its tail and cheerfully swam back to the surface of the lake, splashing water everywhere.

Luoluo happily laughed.

.....

.....

Many days later, Chen Changsheng's party returned to the capital.

The signs of battle were still evident on the streets. Many buildings had collapsed, and even the reception hall of the Divine General of the East's estate had been destroyed. Fortunately, no one had been hurt.

The restaurants of Hundred Flowers Lane were even worse off. Even after two bouts of autumn rain, smoke would still emerge from random places.

Chen Changsheng did not go to the Li Palace first. Instead, he went straight to the Orthodox Academy.

It hadn't been long since he had seen it, but he missed it dearly.

Luoluo was just about to rush into his bosom when she suddenly noticed that something was different about him. Her eyes went wide.

Chen Changsheng nodded.

Luoluo exclaimed and then quickly covered her mouth. Her eyes filled with joy.

Chen Changsheng laughed and rubbed her head.

Luoluo tilted her head, her eyes squinting. She was as adorable as a little tiger.

Chen Changsheng drew back his hand.

Luoluo was just about to resume her rush into her teacher's chest when she suddenly saw a flash of white clothes.

She hurriedly retracted her smile and solemnly said, "I have seen Teacher's wife."

.....

.....

Xu Yourong returned, Tang Thirty-Six returned, and Su Moyu, Chu Wenbin, and the other teachers and students had also returned.

Of course, there would always be some people that couldn't return.

Guan Feibai and Bai Cai did not go to the capital to meet up with Gou Hanshi, but chose to return straight to Mount Li.

When the disciples of Mount Li saw those funerary urns, they wept and then drowned themselves in alcohol for three days.

Qi Jian was also very anguished, as her senior brother Liang Banhu had died. But she did not drink, as she was not just anguished, but concerned as well.

Zhexiu had not returned.

He did not return to Mount Li, nor did he return to the Orthodox Academy, and the Wolf tribe had been seeking out any news of him on the grasslands.

No one knew where he was or if he was alive.

Chen Changsheng gazed at the tightly shut door and said, "He was even able to come out of Zhou Prison alive, so there's no reason for him to die like this."

Tang Thirty-Six replied, "I also think that he's still alive, because he still owes me a lot of money."

.....

.....

Xuelao City welcomed a bitter winter, with heavy snow falling every day.

Within the city, the resources left behind by the deceased nobles meant that life was manageable, but life outside the city was very difficult.

The human garrison maintained strict martial law within the city, but little attention was paid to the outside. One could only look to spring next year to see if any rations would be sent over.

In the northern region of the city was a hill. It was so thickly covered in snow that it was almost impossible to tell that this was once a graveyard.

Only the occasional black monolith poking out of the snow indicated this place's former purpose.

The snow suddenly shifted and began to bulge. As the snow toppled down, it revealed a person.

This person was dressed in shabby clothes, and the skin exposed outside the clothes was a vomit-inducing green. The thick scent of decay about this person made it difficult to distinguish this person as alive or dead.

If not for the harshly cold weather, the smell of this corpse would have spread very far.

This freak took up the snow and slowly cleaned their green body.

They then found a black robe in the grave and put it over their body.

A raised hood could block out the wind and snow, could obscure one's eyes.

One could faintly see that this freak's eyes were extremely cold and indifferent.

Chapter 1181 – What a Fine Autumn

The freak that had climbed out of its grave was Black Robe.

Her methods truly were extraordinary. She had succeeded in deceiving everyone.

Yes, this graveyard was not a sacrificial altar for communicating with the Sacred Light Continent, just a means of distracting the Demon Lord's attention.

But this graveyard was a sacrificial altar.

The nobles being offered were not offerings to the Sacred Light Continent, but to the abyss to assist her in reincarnating.

This evil method was what had allowed her to live for so many years, the greatest secret that made it incredibly difficult for her to be captured or killed.

In the last several centuries, she had used this method twice.

While she was setting up the spatial path to the Sacred Light Continent, she had not forgotten to arrange a path of escape.

Thus, even though Chen Changsheng's breakthrough into the Divine and Su Li's sword from the heavens had truly left her extremely disappointed and in pain, she had not despaired.

As long as she was alive, there would be a chance to stage a comeback.

At the time, she had already prepared herself to be killed by the human experts so that the sacrificial altar could revive her.

To her surprise, Wang Zhice was not prepared to kill her, only jail her in Sangharama Temple. He was even prepared to enter into hostilities with the other human experts.

This matter was truly rather worthy of ridicule.

Black Robe was not touched, only anxious.

The Demon Lord had sensed her mood, so he had thought of a way to help Liu Qing kill her.

Nominally, it was because he wanted to die with her, but the truth was not so.

The Demon Lord had done this even though he did not know what Black Robe was planning.

One could only say that the Demon Lord truly did love her.

.....

.....

The winds howled as the snow rustled.

Her gaze rested on the snow, where she spied those few remaining drops of golden blood.

This was the Demon Commander's blood.

The Demon Commander was her most trusted companion.

The body she was using had been personally selected by the Demon Commander and personally placed in the grave.

Black Robe knew what had happened to the Demon Commander after that.

For this, she felt deeply apologetic.

Even until the end, the Demon Commander did not know that she was deceiving her, that she wanted to also annihilate the Demon race.

Black Robe squatted and thrust her hand into that golden blood. She brought the blood to her nose and sniffed, then kissed it.

She stood up and began to walk up the hill.

She had remained in the grave for many days. It was only after she confirmed that the human armies had relaxed their guard that she dared to come out.

In these last few days, she had eaten nothing but snow and been forced to endure the bitter cold, making her extremely weak.

Most importantly, she needed to restart her cultivation. She needed several dozen days before she would have the strength to defend herself. As for her strength at its prime, that would require several decades.

She slowly walked to the top of the hill. As she gazed at the distant plains of snow, a smile appeared on her lightly decaying lips.

When she thought about the cold and hunger she had borne over the last few days, she felt herself to be an outstanding avenger.

She had prepared many safehouses in the snowy plains, supplied with food. As long as she could reach one of them, she would be safe for the time being.

Once she recovered her strength, she would return to Xuelao City—no, to her homeland to the south that she had not returned to in so many years.

She could already imagine what she should do next. After defeating the demons, the humans would certainly descend into internal conflict. It could be between north and south, the Imperial Court and the Li Palace, the humans and the demi-humans, or even between martial brothers, but whichever it was, new conflicts were certain to crop up.

This was an inevitability of history, the law that she was about to wield as her weapon.

Her revenge would continue.

Black Robe turned to face Xuelao City, a faint sorrow running through her.

Stories were basically all written like this. They would have an open ending, and it would only be after many years that a new chapter would appear.

But the story today was different.

Black Robe prepared to walk down the slope and vanish into the vastness of the snowy plains.

At this moment, a part of the snow bulged and scattered.

A massive demon stood up from the snow, its shadow falling on Black Robe's face.

Black Robe needed only a glance to identify it as a member of the Gruel clan.

The problem was that this demon was already dead. However, the cold weather recently had frozen it, preventing decay and making it rigid.

How could a rigid corpse crawl out of its grave and rush toward her?

Black Robe's eyes constricted as the corpse approached. She wondered, just what sort of ghost is this?

In the past, Black Robe would only need a light brush of her sleeve, perhaps only a glance, to pulverize this corpse.

But her cultivation was all gone and she was extremely weak. Let alone this ability, she did not even have the ability to dodge.

Boom! The massive demon corpse crushed Black Robe's body into the snow.

Whether coincidentally or intentionally, a hard stone lay in the snow at this place, pressing right against her neck.

There was a light crack.

Black Robe's neck was broken. Her blood slowly dyed the snow red.

She opened her eyes wide, staring at the overcast sky with a look of rage and despair, tinged with confusion.

In her current state, she couldn't even blow away the snowflakes

falling in her eyes, much less push away this heavy corpse.

She could only helplessly wait for death.

After a moment, the heavy corpse flipped to the side on its own.

There was a rip as a hole was torn in the corpse's chest. A person slowly climbed out of it.

This person was dressed in very thin clothes and his body was covered in blood and filth. He was very thin, his face pale, and he gave off a nauseating stench.

Perhaps this effort had used up the last of his strength. The man gasped and lay unmoving on the snow, right next to Black Robe.

Black Robe turned her head with difficulty and asked him, "Who are you?"

The man's voice was soft and horse, as it had been many days since he had last drunk water.

"I am called Zhexiu."

Black Robe knew who Zhexiu was, and said nothing.

Cold winds blew across the hill while a cavalry patrol passed by in the distance. Nobody noticed that two people were quietly lying side by side at the top of the hill.

If someone looked from above, they might think that this was a rather beautiful sight, that these were lovers who had died together.

Alas, this was anything but the truth.

After some time, Black Robe deeply sighed and asked, "How did you know?"

She was naturally asking about how Zhexiu had guessed that she would use the corpse in this graveyard to revive.

Zhexiu replied, "I didn't know what you were up to. It was just that when I arrived at this graveyard, I happened to see that you

were also here."

At the time, the human armies were about to break into Xuelao City. At that tense moment, that the wounded Black Robe chose to come to this graveyard meant that this place was very important to her.

Black Robe asked, "So you've been waiting for me to come back this entire time?"

Zhexiu affirmed, "Yes."

Black Robe asked, "Did you not think that you might have been wrong?"

When she had been killed by Liu Qing that night in the Demon Hall, her soul had used the power of the sacrificial altar to escape. But she had been in no rush to leave, and cautiously hid herself in the grave for several dozen days.

She could not think of anyone who was more patient than she was.

And there was simply no reason for Zhexiu to wait in this graveyard for so many days off a single conjecture.

Zhexiu replied, "I wasn't needed elsewhere, and I'm an ideal candidate for doing jobs that no one else can do."

Black Robe inquired, "What if I never appeared? Would you continue waiting? Wait until you became an actual corpse?"

Zhexiu answered, "No. Once I confirmed that you wouldn't be coming back, I would naturally leave."

Black Robe asked, "How could you be sure?"

Zhexiu explained, "When hunting, the most important thing is not experience, but intuition."

Black Robe asked, "What if your intuition was wrong?"

Zhexiu answered, "Not every hunt will yield prey. It's fine if I

come again."

Black Robe thought this over and said, "That's reasonable."

.....

.....

The news that Zhexiu had reappeared was quickly sent back to the capital, along with an even more secretive piece of news.

Only after reading the letter did Chen Changsheng realize that Black Robe had not died that night, but had then been killed by Zhexiu. This matter was not publicly announced, because Zhexiu had written clearly in his letter that he did not need this sort of honor. In consideration for all sides, it was best to treat this episode like it never happened.

Thus, Liu Qing still believed that Black Robe had died to his sword and felt that he no longer had any desires in his line of work. After confirming that neither the Imperial Court nor the Li Palace needed him to inquire into Cao Yunping's whereabouts, he calmly ended his life as an assassin, Xu Yourong and Archbishop An Lin bearing witness, and began to live out his twilight years.

Chen Changsheng went to the alley of the Northern Military Department to see Prince Chen Liu.

By now, Prince Chen Liu naturally had no need to hide anything. He was proud and arrogant, seemingly unaware that he was a prisoner. Upon seeing this once-familiar friend with this rather strange face, Chen Changsheng finally understood why Tang Thirty-Six had never liked him.

Prince Chen Liu was a very cool and sober individual. He lived very explicitly, with a clear understanding of what he wanted in life. Thus, his desires seemed extremely out in the open, bared for the world to see. In the end, this manifested as calm, the pretentiousness that Tang Thirty-Six loathed the most.

Prince Chen Liu stared into Chen Changsheng's eyes and said, "In

another history, perhaps I won in the end."

Chen Changsheng replied, "Perhaps, because that history wouldn't have me."

.....

.....

Four years ago, a crabapple tree was once more planted in that small courtyard in the alley of the Northern Military Department.

Two years ago, the repairs to the Mausoleum of Books were formally concluded. The river dikes and stone paths damaged in the battle from ten-some years ago and the conflict from ten years ago were all repaired. Under the diligent workmanship of the craftsmen, they did not seem particularly new. They had been built to look old.

The verdant forests reminded Wang Po of Xun Mei.

He walked up the Divine Path. Nobody came to stop him.

The pavilion had collapsed but had not been rebuilt. Han Qing was dead and there was no guardian now.

He walked to the summit and silently stared at that characterless Heavenly Tome Monolith for a very long time.

He turned around to face the sprawling capital below, his gaze ultimately resting on the Imperial Palace.

What a fine autumn it was.

He turned and left.

He never returned to the capital again.

.....

.....

Chen Changsheng went to the Imperial Palace and told Yuren that Wang Po had left.

Yuren's expression did not change, though Divine General He Ming and the other ministers were clearly relieved.

It was only after everyone retreated that Yuren gave an assessment of this situation, or perhaps of Wang Po as a person.

"One whose heart cherishes all living beings is a true warrior of the country."

Chen Changsheng was rather depressed. Wang Po's departure had made him think about Shang Xingzhou's life.

"In his life, Master also only wanted to do one thing. If he were still alive, he would definitely be very happy, but he might... also be very empty."

"Perhaps."

Yuren did not finish his thought. He looked at the paper on his desk and shook his head. "Your brushstrokes are wrong. Write it one hundred times."

The young Daoist boy, who had always been very resistant to the calligraphy textbooks, gave Chen Changsheng a teary-eyed stare and begged, "Senior Brother..."

In Xining Village's old temple, if Yuren or Chen Changsheng made a mistake in their memorization, they were certain to be punished.

Chen Changsheng had seen this sort of sight too many times. Rubbing the boy's head, he smiled and said, "He's your Eldest Senior Brother, so I also have to listen to him."

Yuren noted, "So I say that leaving at the ideal moment is an incredibly wonderful thing."

This was an answer to Chen Changsheng's words.

The abruptness left Chen Changsheng a little dazed. It took a while for him to respond.

"Yes."

Chapter 1182 – Journeying to the Sacred Light Continent

Chen Changsheng returned to the Li Palace and once again discussed the matter of Wang Po's departure, to which Xu Yourong said something similar to Yuren's words.

"Dying for one's country..."

Wang Po had given up his plans to demand justice from the Great Zhou Dynasty, had given up on his revenge against the Chen Imperial clan. This was an incredibly difficult thing to do.

Mentally, it was no different from sacrificing oneself for the country.

Chen Changsheng strongly agreed, and then he recalled his senior brother's last words to him.

"Leaving at the ideal moment is an incredibly wonderful thing."

Anyone could tell that these words referred to Shang Xingzhou.

Chen Changsheng would not deny this, but he also felt like those words were also aimed at him.

"I might... leave for a while."

He somewhat hesitantly spoke.

Xu Yourong asked, "The reason?"

There were many reasons. There was that phrase from just now, and how watching his senior brother teach his junior brother calligraphy with such harshness made him think of his master.

Or maybe it was due to the many ministers and commoners that were praising his senior brother by saying that he was becoming closer and closer to Emperor Taizong every day.

But he couldn't voice any of these reasons, as these were all just speculations without a single shred of evidence. Moreover, such

speculations were truly very irresponsible.

He did not say them, but Xu Yourong knew.

She said, "Perhaps you're overthinking it."

"Yes." Chen Changsheng looked at her and earnestly said, "But before Emperor Taizong did those things, he was not necessarily the Emperor Taizong that we know, but the Prince of Qi that everyone praised. Perhaps he only killed his brothers and imprisoned his father because he was left with no other choice."

Xu Yourong asked, "And so?"

Chen Changsheng replied, "I don't want to become the second Emperor Taizong, so... I want to leave."

"If this is your reason, I do not support you, because this is an utterly passive excuse."

Xu Yourong declared, "Living should be a collection of active actions."

Chen Changsheng thought this over and said, "I myself want to leave."

Xu Yourong asked once more, "The reason?"

Chen Changsheng said, "I want to know where I came from."

Ever since the age of ten, he had lived beneath the shadow of death.

On that night, when the Tianhai Divine Empress helped him to defy the heavens and change fate, he finally no longer had to spend every day contemplating the question of death. He had the right to contemplate other questions.

Other than the questions of life and death, three questions were of paramount importance in a person's life.

'Who are you?'

'Where did you come from?'

'Where do you want to go?'

If one wanted to answer the third question, one first had to know what the answers to the first two were.

The war with the demons had not completely concluded, but he was no longer needed.

Shang Xingzhou and Black Robe said that he came from the Sacred Light Continent, so he wanted to go there and take a look.

"I accept this reason."

Xu Yourong added, "But don't take too long."

Surprised, Chen Changsheng asked, "You're not going with me?"

Xu Yourong seriously returned, "I was born in the capital."

.....

.....

Chen Changsheng returned to Xining Village. Only now did he think about his last conversation with Yourong, and then he recalled Tang Thirty-Six's assessment of her that he had made many years ago in the Plum Garden Inn: a woman that makes others speechless.

This realization comforted Chen Changsheng somewhat, but he had completely forgotten that Tang Thirty-Six had given him the exact same assessment.

For the Pope to suddenly leave was not merely irresponsible. It truly made others speechless as well.

It was late winter, so the trees growing along the stream were bare. There were no petals in the water and no books in the temple.

Chen Changsheng slept in the old temple for the night. He woke up at five o'clock on the morning of the next day. After washing his face in the stream, he began walking toward that side. The fog

grew thicker and thicker as he walked over to that side, and at its thickest, the fog became clouds. In the clouds were streams, creeping vines, easily startled deer, and the indistinct figures of many mysterious beasts.

These were all familiar sights to him, so he pressed on until he reached the base of that solitary mountain.

A Unicorn appeared, its body of pure white making it seem like a divine being.

Chen Changsheng quietly met its gaze.

He knew that this Unicorn had always been waiting for him, had been waiting for him for many years.

"There's no need to absolutely be with any particular person. It's fine to be alone."

Chen Changsheng looked at it and shook his head, saying with a faint smile, "Go."

The Unicorn reluctantly took its leave, turning to look back at him every ten or so steps.

Chen Changsheng calmly watched it, not turning to leave. Only after it vanished deep into the thick clouds did he continue his journey.

The solitary mountain was shrouded in clouds throughout the year. Its surface was very moist, covered in moss and flowing rivulets of water.

But to an expert of the Divine Domain, it was as easy to traverse as flat ground.

.....

.....

Nine days ago, the sun sank into the Cloud Grave and never appeared again.

On the tenth day, Chen Changsheng reached the summit of the solitary mountain.

There was nothing here other than the sea of clouds. It was so deserted that he felt very lonesome.

He sat on a stone at the peak, took out a fruit, and slowly and diligently ate it.

There were many things in the sword sheath, including food. Zhizhi had personally prepared great quantities of food, but he ate none of it, only a single fruit.

It was just like how he had chosen to climb to the peak instead of using any other method. Perhaps this imparted a sense of ceremony to this process that he felt was needed.

After eating the fruit, he raised his head up to the sky and realized that it was right before his eyes.

He stretched out his hand and felt it. He realized that the feel of the sky was rather decent. It was not as hard as he imagined. It was smooth and flexible, much like Yourong's face.

He closed his eyes.

Three thousand swords howled as they exited. They seemed bursting with joy as they flew around the sea of clouds. They probably knew that they would soon be off to another world.

.....

.....

Chen Changsheng reached the other side of the sky, falling to the ground.

It wasn't too painful, as the carpet-like green grass was very soft.

This was a grassland that had a circumference of several hundred zhang.

Chen Changsheng turned his head and saw that the just-

shattered spatial crystal wall was slowly closing. The color of the sky was growing fainter and fainter until it completely vanished.

Through this, he understood that the solitary mountain on the Central Continent that soared straight into the sky was actually pointed straight at him on this side.

It turned out that these two continents were not parallel, but perpendicular to each other.

To this place, the Central Continent was a wall.

This grassland was truly very small. It only took him a moment to walk out.

Beyond the grassland was a barren desert. The white sands created a world that was naught but a white ocean.

The light of nine suns was blinding.

Chen Changsheng randomly picked a direction and began to walk.

A single step covered several li.

He quickly encountered the natives of this continent.

More and more of them.

No one asked about his background, and there was certainly no one who dared to obstruct him.

The natives gazed at him with reverence, parting like a tide, revealing that sacrificial altar.

The weather was truly very hot. That white-robed monk was sitting on the sacrificial altar, basking in the sun.

Many years ago, Chen Changsheng had accompanied the Tianhai Divine Empress's soul and met him by Xining Village's stream.

"I'm about to die, my Qi and blood exhausted, so I'm a little cold."

The white-robed monk explained.

Chen Changsheng replied, "This place truly is a little cold."

It was reasonable for the monk to say that he was cold, but why did he think it was cold?

After all, those nine suns in the sky were all real.

"Have you come to take us home?"

The white-robed monk asked.

Upon hearing this, the tens of thousands of people around the sacrificial altar prostrated, weepingly imploring, "None care not for their homeland."

Chen Changsheng silently regarded these people.

The monk explained, "Your master promised me this. If you do not agree, I will wait for your junior brother to do it."

Chen Changsheng replied, "If I can come back, I will seriously consider it."

The monk understood his meaning and asked, "You want to see the path you came on?"

Chen Changsheng replied, "Yes."

The monk said, "You should be well aware that this place is not the Sacred Light Continent."

Chen Changsheng nodded.

He knew a long time ago that this place was not the Sacred Light Continent.

If the Sacred Light Continent were so close, the Central Continent would have already been enslaved by that God.

This place had once been the main continent of that civilization and was now the Forsaken Land.

The blazing and torrid light that seemed to be full of energy was not real Sacred Light, just a false image.

This continent had already lost all of its energy, its vitality fading away, constantly waning with the passage of time.

"Back then, we sent three drops of Imperial Uncle's blood to the Sacred Light Continent through the sacrificial altar."

The monk added, "And then there was you."

The Imperial Uncle he spoke of was Chen Xuanba.

Chen Changsheng was quiet for a while, then he asked, "Can the people of the Sacred Light Continent come to this place through the sacrificial altar?"

"This altar can only transfer lifeless objects."

The monk shook his head and explained, "Imperial Uncle's blood was not alive, and neither was the Heaven Shrouding Sword."

Chen Changsheng said, "But I'm alive?"

The white-robed monk asked, "Do you still not understand? When you were sent over, you were just a fruit."

Chen Changsheng fell into another period of silence, after which he asked, "Then how was I born?"

The monk replied, "Through ten months of pregnancy, just like everyone else."

Chen Changsheng understood. His voice tinged with hope, he asked, "Is she still alive?"

The monk looked at him with pity, just like he had looked at that young woman twenty-some years ago.

"When you were born, she died."

Chen Changsheng was quiet for a very long time. Finally, he said, "You are all bad people."

He was talking about the white-robed monk, Black Robe, and his master, Shang Xingzhou.

"The Sacred Light Continent has always wanted to use this

sacrificial altar to open a spatial path."

The monk continued, "They most recently succeeded ten-some years ago. They were waiting for Shang Xingzhou to use you to bring down divine judgment or to use my soul as a guide."

It was only now that Chen Changsheng understood why the Divine Empress, when she was battling three Saints simultaneously, had prioritized the monk's soul next to Xining Village's stream.

He looked into the monk's eyes and said, "If this is the case, then you are the worst of them all."

The monk was quiet for a while, then said, "I've never been to the Sacred Light Continent, but I once sensed God's strength. That is not something that we can resist."

Chen Changsheng replied, "Even so, you cannot become the vanguard of the enemy."

The monk said, "If not for the Sacred Light Continent sending energy through the sacrificial altar, this continent would have become an utter wasteland ages ago."

Chen Changsheng returned, "If not for the Divine Empress, the Central Continent would also be a wasteland."

The monk commented, "I've always felt that the Tianhai Divine Empress did not die."

Chen Changsheng recalled how the Divine Empress had said to the monk that she had a successor.

What did the Tianhai Divine Empress mean by 'successor'? Was she talking about Yuren, Chen Changsheng, or Xu Yourong?

.....

.....

Deserts spanned the Forsaken Land.

At the edge of the desert, tens of thousands of li away from the oasis where the natives lived, there was a great ocean.

There were no living beings in this ocean. It was a dead sea.

But even the most desolate worlds would have unique forms of life. Perhaps one could say that these were no longer living beings, but spirits of the dead.

Massive waves emerged from the ocean as cold winds roared.

A Netherworld Bone Dragon, ten-some li long, flew through the wind and waves.

This Netherworld Bone Dragon was not flaunting its strength to the heavens and earth, nor was it recounting its despairs to God. It was being forced.

A squirrel squatted in the eye of the Bone Dragon, a little black dot.

It was fearlessly watching the froth of the waves, occasionally even squealing in joy.

It turned out that this Netherworld Bone Dragon was its play partner.

On the shore, a Black Goat quietly gazed at the sky, its thoughts inscrutable.

.....

.....

"I want to go to the Sacred Light Continent."

"I've never been to the Sacred Light Continent, nor will I ever be able to."

"How did Su Li get there?"

"If my guess is correct, he probably went through Sangharama Temple."

Chen Changsheng was stunned by these words.

He knew that Wang Zhice and Daoist Wu had been in Sangharama Temple this entire time, most likely attempting to recreate those murals and re-establish the Buddhist lineage.

Everyone believed that Sangharama Temple was assuredly on some extremely remote mountain. No one would have expected that Sangharama Temple was not on the Central Continent, but the Forsaken Land.

Upon walking into Sangharama Temple, he saw that Daoist Wu was still painting the walls.

And then, he saw Wang Zhice.

Wang Zhice had a head of white. He was lightly blowing on a flute, perhaps in remembrance of someone.

Chen Changsheng did not feel sorry, but he did feel respect.

It seemed that Wang Zhice had spent all this time guarding this vital path for the Human race.

Of course, that was only if Sangharama Temple really did lead to the Sacred Light Continent.

"There's a fissure in space here. It's extremely unstable and requires constant repair."

Wang Zhice put down the flute and said, "Master Wu is doing precisely this."

Daoist Wu stared at the paintings on the wall and sneered, "I wonder who it was that beat me so brutally in the Li Palace? Do you know how important I am now?"

Wang Zhice said, "I do not have much time or energy to concern myself with other matters."

From the moment people found out that Wang Zhice was still alive, they had many poor opinions of him.

To not concern oneself with worldly affairs was irresponsible.

Chen Changsheng once had similar thoughts, but today, he learned that these were all misunderstandings.

Sangharama Temple was far too important. In comparison, the struggles over power and the life-or-death battles on the Central Continent were trifling concerns.

"Since there's a spatial fissure here, why doesn't God use it to open up a spatial path?"

Chen Changsheng asked.

Wang Zhice replied, "Because God also cannot guarantee that such a spatial path would be one-way."

Chen Changsheng did not understand this reasoning.

Wang Zhice replied, "You will know when you go over to that side."

Chen Changsheng asked, "Has Sir ever been?"

Wang Zhice replied, "I still have not prepared myself to meet that individual."

Chen Changsheng thought for a while and then asked, "Is it not a little irresponsible for me and Su Li to do this?"

Wang Zhice answered, "Curiosity is one of the best parts about being human. It is worth the risk, even worth paying everything."

Chen Changsheng asked, "How do I get there?"

Wang Zhice brought him to the murals.

There were many landscapes on the wall.

There were tall spires, the lines innately imbued with a divine aura.

There were pastures and white clouds, scattered cottages, bustling cities, and sunlit colosseums concealing their dark and sinister natures.

The style of the buildings was very similar to the ones in Xuelao

City.

There were also many intelligent beings on these murals that were different from humans.

There were beings that seemed like craftsmen. They looked like lower-class demons, except they were even shorter. Some of the beings were immaculately beautiful, very similar to the Elf race that had secluded itself in the Great Western Continent.

Chen Changsheng became more and more entranced. Finally, the sound of a bell woke him from his daze.

He was surrounded by green pasture, and white clouds drifted over the blue sky. The sound of the bell was coming from the church in front of him, and shouts could be heard from a square building nearby.

This language was incredibly close to Demon language, so Chen Changsheng could understand it. The words seemed to concern going to school.

He had already arrived at the Sacred Light Continent.

Chapter 1183 – The Path of Concealed Divinity

Many events took place in the thirty-third spring of the new era.

Firstly, the Emperor of the Great Zhou issued a decree requesting that the Li Palace choose a new Pope as quickly as possible. This decree engendered massive controversy, and only a few people knew that after issuing this decree, the Emperor sat in a daze on his throne for a very long time. He then had his junior brother write a letter to Holy Maiden Peak.

The Road of Peace was also very busy. The Prince of Zhongshan had recently cursed out his new chef because the taste of his zhajiangmian wasn't right. In the nearby Xue Estate, Xue Yejin, who had obtained second place in the Grand Examination, left the Mausoleum of Books and was immediately brought around by his mother to meet potential marriage partners, spending every day and night in a most exasperated state. Next door to the Xue Estate, Zhou Tong's former secret residence had been quietly possessed by Mo Yu. Recently, her favorite thing to do after concluding the court sessions was to accompany the Prince of Louyang in this place in researching the method which resulted in the tastiest pickled radishes. It seemed that she really was pregnant.

The former Governor of Xunyang City, Feng Guijun, had stayed in Xuelao City all this time. It was said that he was studying how to sing opera. Without the slightest courtesy, the Great Zhou Dynasty had begun to share the culture of the Demon race with the world. The precious research notes of Grand Scholar Tungus had been evenly divided between the Imperial Court and Mount Li. By now, Gou Hanshi had not left the principal mountain of Mount Li for three years, those research notes his constant companions. Qiushan Jun, on the other hand, had only read them for three days before casting aside the desperate pleas of his father and leaving

Mount Li alone, his destination the cold and distant snowy plains. By the time Guan Feibai heard of this news and came back from Wenshui, he was too late, and he no longer had the chance to ask his eldest brother just what had been written in that letter to Liang Banhu.

No one knew that Qiushan Jun had gone to the Northern Sea. There, he found Mountain Men Yichun and Jingbo. He did not conceal his intentions, and told the two Mountain Men that he was prepared to live on the shores of the Northern Sea for many years. He would wait for them to die of old age, and then he would take Grand Scholar Tungus's notebooks and dissect their bodies in the hope that he could find a solution to the Demon race's decreasing fertility. The two Mountain Men were not angry, nor did they think him crazy. Smiling and laughing, they agreed to his request.

On the next day, Qiushan Jun saw Nanke. Only then did he realize that she had been living here for many years. It appeared, however, that not only had her illness not been cured, it had even worsened.

He smiled and said, "What a coincidence. I've recently learned a sword song. Do you want to listen?"

.....

.....

Everything in the world was faring well, but not so much for Tang Thirty-Six.

Now matter how arrogantly he acted in Wenshui City, he couldn't show off his skills, and back in the capital, he couldn't stand the lovey-dovey couple that was Zhexiu and Qi Jian. The Old Master was hale and hearty, and it was clear that he wouldn't be dying for the next few decades. His father had been completely cleansed of the poison and could live for at least a few more centuries, so what was left for him to do?

He went to that plum-blossom-covered mountain outside the city, went to that nunnery cloaked in plum blossoms, and ordered a cup of plum blossom tea. He sat for three autumns, but he never received a response.

Luoluo was also not faring very well. She had been formally conferred the title of Crown Princess, but this had little effect on her life. Besides reading books, cultivating, and painting pear blossoms, she would often look at the sea of clouds, a lonesome expression on her face as she subconsciously caressed that stone pearl.

Xuanyuan Po did not continue to lead an army, nor did he join Jin Yulu in the pursuit of agriculture. He chose to act as Luoluo's personal guard.

When Luoluo was standing in front of that round window and gazing blankly at the sea of clouds, he would blankly watch her. He knew that the princess would stand there for a very long time, because the princess truly was a diligent cultivator, and the day she crossed that threshold, she would go to that world to find Chen Changsheng.

The Tong River in the twilight was a gorgeous belt of gold.

Life in the village was peaceful and leisurely.

A jade tile fell onto the table, attracting a burst of gasps.

An All-One Suit.

Xu Yourong quietly gazed at the tile and suddenly said, "I'm feeling rather good."

The woman and the other two mahjong players were preparing to add their comments when they suddenly realized that something was off.

Her words did not seem to be referring to the tiles.

.....

.....

The clouds which lingered around Holy Maiden Peak throughout the year suddenly parted. An uncountable number of strange and rare birds flew over from all parts of the continent as if they were coming to pay respects to a Saint.

An autumn rain washed the Tong River as every place in the world responded.

Beneath a Wutong tree, Wang Po looked in the direction of South Stream Temple and sighed, "Outstanding."

He was keenly aware that the reason Xu Yourong had not left together with Chen Changsheng was not that there were too many matters in South Stream Temple, or that the situation of the world was not stable.

She was unsatisfied. She wanted to leave on her own.

There had been various reasons that had allowed Chen Changsheng to break into the Divine in Xuelao City, and the process was impossible to repeat.

In these circumstances, it was Xu Yourong who was the youngest to enter the Divine Domain.

.....

.....

Before leaving, Xu Yourong received a letter from the capital.

The writing was very clean, somewhat similar to both Chen Changsheng's and Yuren's.

The contents of the letter had been dictated by Yuren.

"I will abdicate in three years. Bring him back to replace me."

.....

.....

Someone had left this world even earlier than Xu Yourong. She

had also gone to find Chen Changsheng.

A black-clothed girl walked out of the abyss. Gazing at the awesome fortress of ice before her and hearing the shouts from the walls, she wore an expression of confusion.

If she was hearing things correctly, those people were shouting about dragon knights, but wasn't that a pack of lizards flying through the snowstorm?

.....

.....

Chen Changsheng squatted by a creek, using a handkerchief to wipe the beads of water off his hand. Rising, he walked through a forest and past a fence, making his way toward that building in the distance.

His hair had been cut short and was slightly curled. It was impossible to comb this black and luxuriant hair into a topknot, but he also looked very refreshing this way.

The clothes he wore were spotlessly clean, a stark contrast to the rest of the magic apprentices.

Perhaps it was this reason that so endeared him to both the professors in the school and the aunties in the pastures.

Chen Changsheng was currently an ordinary magic apprentice.

The Duchy of Greyfort had tens of thousands of magic apprentices like him.

He was not worried that people might discover the secret that he was from another world, even though there were many outstanding magicians in this school, even two sorcerers.

His performance in this magic school was very mediocre. There was nothing special about him, not in the ripples of his mana or the strength of his telekinesis.

If he was willing, he could make his weak mana ripples vanish at

any time, making himself into a truly ordinary person.

Even if God saw him, it would be impossible to realize his true identity, because he had truly succeeded in concealing his divinity within him.

When he arrived at the Sacred Light Continent, he had realized that this world was packed with Sacred Light.

This Sacred Light and the Sacred Light in his body had once been one, so they naturally melded with each other. This also meant that he had truly become one with the world.

Yes, he was currently at the Concealed Divinity Realm, the same realm that the Tianhai Divine Empress had reached.

Other humans who came to the Sacred Light Continent would probably not receive as terrifying a boost as he had, but they would still become much stronger.

This world was bursting with energy.

This was probably one of the reasons Su Li had been able to sever the spatial path with one slash of his sword several years ago.

Although his sword had been very formidable on the Central Continent, it had not been at that level.

In the Forsaken Land, Chen Changsheng had once wondered why God did not use the spatial fissure in Sangharama Temple to create a spatial path.

Wang Zhice explained that this was because God could not guarantee that this spatial path would be one-way.

He now understood the reason.

God was afraid.

He was afraid that humans would come to the Sacred Light Continent.

.....

.....

The light of dusk fell on the window.

Chen Changsheng walked up to the window and looked out at the lawn around the school.

Many teachers and students were eating dinner on the lawn. When they saw him at the window, they cheerily called out to him.

He was suddenly a little unwilling.

It was time to leave.

He had been a very diligent student in these last few years. He now had an excellent grasp of this continent's history, knowledge of magic, geography, and culture.

And based on his calculations, Yourong was going to get here soon.

This world was so big that he worried that she would not be able to find him.

He had once attempted to inquire on Su Li's whereabouts but had come away empty-handed. Even a cardinal he had happened to come across by chance had never heard of him.

It was only the leader of the assassins who could so perfectly conceal any news of his whereabouts.

Of course, it was also possible that the Holy See had deliberately blocked any information on him from getting out.

He decided to go to the Holy City and see what was going on at the Holy See.

Most importantly, he was sure that Xu Yourong would go to the Holy City.

Because the Pontifex Maximus was there.

The Holy Emperor and the Pontifex Maximus were the two most powerful people on the Sacred Light Continent. No one was sure

which of them wielded the most authority.

What one could be sure of was that the Pontifex Maximus was the strongest expert of the Sacred Light Continent.

He was called the man closest to God.

.....

.....

Half a month was needed for the fastest carriage to travel from Greenbow County to the Holy City, which was considered a very long journey.

Most usually stopped at La Roussel Monastery for a while, resting and replenishing their supplies.

As Chen Changsheng contemplated the mashed potatoes, hard black bread, and fried fish on his plate, for the first time, he began to think of home.

After casually eating his dinner, he returned to his room and diligently cleaned himself. At ten o'clock, he promptly lay on his bed and began to sleep so that he could wake up at five o'clock in the morning.

Strangely, maybe because the moonlight outside the window was too white or the last cries of the autumn cicadas were too plaintive, he couldn't get any sleep.

As he gazed at the frosty moonlight in front of his bed, he decided that once he picked up Yourong and traveled around with her for a bit, he would go home, not waiting for Luoluo and the others.

This decision failed to compose his mind. He still could not sleep.

Chen Changsheng did not wave his hand to instantly kill all the autumn cicadas around the monastery, nor did he summon a cloud to block out the Moon. He put on some clothes and took a stroll.

Unwittingly, he walked into the deepest part of the monastery. The stone bastion here was unlit and appeared rather sinister.

To cultivators of the Concealed Divinity Realm, there was no such thing as 'unwittingly'. He had already sensed that there was a problem here, but he had elected to ignore it.

Excepting those few existences like the Pontifex Maximus, there was no one in this world that could threaten him, and traps and ambushes were meaningless.

There was an array under the stone bastion, and invisible magic lines crisscrossed through the weeds. Even experts like archbishops or paladins would not be able to cross these boundaries.

Chen Changsheng heard several cries for help.

The calls for help were coming from a dungeon. Only by pulling aside the weeds would one be able to see a very small air vent.

There were no lights in the dungeon, but he was able to clearly see what was inside.

The person imprisoned in that dungeon had a sealed iron mask on his head and was wearing tattered clothes.

The stark white moonlight on the iron mask made it look even more terrifying.

A few blades of grass were growing in the chinks of the mask.

It was hard to say how many years this person had been imprisoned here.

The prisoner became ecstatic upon seeing Chen Changsheng, even a little crazy, ramming his metal mask against the walls.

Chen Changsheng quietly watched, waiting for him to calm down.

"Teacher, save me!"

The man in the iron mask crawled up to the air vent and pleaded for help in a trembling voice.

Chen Changsheng asked, "Who are you?"

The man in the iron mask replied, "I am Augustus."

Chen Changsheng asked, "You were waiting for me?"

It was obvious that someone had done something in the monastery to intentionally draw Chen Changsheng to this place.

Someone who could silently influence Chen Changsheng's judgment had to possess an unfathomable cultivation.

Chen Changsheng also smelled a very familiar scent on these plans, so he was in a rather good mood and was willing to listen to what this prisoner had to say.

"Someone who called himself a traveler told me that as long as I patiently waited and sincerely prayed, Sir would take me as a student and rescue me from this place."

The man in the iron mask was clearly not lying.

Only that person would be so bored as to call himself a traveler and say such things.

"How could you be sure that the person he spoke of was me?"

Chen Changsheng asked.

The man in the iron mask excitedly said, "You were completely able to ignore the seal laid down by that evil traitor Richelieu! It must be Sir!"

Chen Changsheng recalled that Cardinal Richelieu was a supporter of the Holy Emperor.

"Just who are you?"

The man in the iron mask said, "I really am called Augustus. I was once a paladin, and I was the Holy Emperor's younger twin. I've already been imprisoned here for many years."

At the end, his voice began to tremble once more. He appeared to be in great pain, full of venom and resentment.

His eyes naturally contained none of these emotions. They were full of hope and anxiety, afraid as he was that Chen Changsheng might leave, and there were even a few tears.

These simple words allowed one to imagine an oft-seen story of court politics.

Chen Changsheng fell into thought and said, "I'm going to the Holy City. We might not be going the same way."

The man in the iron mask nervously said, "We are! We definitely are! Even if Sir wants to go to the Netherworld, I'll absolutely follow in Sir's footsteps!"

Chen Changsheng asked, "But what if I want to go to the Divine Kingdom?"

THE END

Afterword

For various reasons, this afterword is short and written very loosely.

1. 'If fate gives it to you, you should take it, but if fate doesn't give it to you, you shouldn't try to force it.' This is what the story of Way of Choices is about. At the start, I was prepared to write a story about a true Dragon, true Phoenix, and true person, but because I was worried that I wrote Qiushan Jun too well, I did my best to forcefully lessen his role. At the same time, this story is about the word '离' (leave), whether it's the Li Palace or Mount Li. Of course this story is also about 'thank you' and 'you're welcome', but in the last several dozen chapters, I hesitated for a long time before finally deciding to conceal these words, because I didn't want to keep thinking about farewells.

2. Why did I want to write a story about youths? Because I'm gradually getting older, and my blood is cooling. I'm very afraid that, just like I've written so many times in the book, I will gradually become a fat koi slowly sinking into the mud. I want to remind myself that I cannot decay, cannot be afraid. Even if I don't dare to fight, silence is also a sort of stance. When Chen Changsheng said to Xu Yourong that in the war with the demons he was willing to pay with his life, but he did not want to change the way in which this world interacted, and then Xu Yourong reminded him that he couldn't say this to others, that's what I meant.

3. Deleted.

4. The following miscellaneous details were not put into the main text out of length concerns, but they're rather interesting: the Black Dragon's favorite food is braised chicken wings, because she hates Phoenixes. The diets of Nanke and Xu Yourong don't contain birds. The Heavenly Tome Monoliths are shards of a world and are all connected with each other. Right now, they can transmit

sound, but in the future, they can be used to traverse space. In the second-to-last chapter, when Wang Po decided to not take revenge on the Chen Imperial clan and I had Xu Yourong say 'dying for one's country...', that was something I decided on before I even started writing the book and I forced it in here. With regards to Tang Thirty-Six, other than that line about how he's rich both mentally and physically, I also wanted him to say: "I'm not targeting anyone, everyone present is..." Chen Changsheng has an illness, so this is the first thing on his mind when he sees someone, thinking that everyone is ill. This was why he was able to tell that Mo Yu, Su Li, Nanke, Xuanyuan Po, and even Tang Thirty-Six on the night that he was injured, were all sick with a single glance.

5. Reader 'Joy of Life' asks: "Daddy Mao Ni, in chapter 110, 'One Flower, One World', you said at the end that you had confirmed who Tang Thirty-Six's real-life counterpart was, and you also said that you would announce this when the book ended. I'm worried that you won't see this when the book ends, so I'm sending this to you ahead of the time." The answer: that person is my good friend Blue Butterfly.

6. A few years ago, when I was writing novels, I loved my readers. Now, I don't love, I respect them. Everyone, please take care of yourselves. This is very important.

7. I should still love this world even more and work even better.

8. In August, I will publish a new book. As for the topic, name, personality, and essence, I haven't thought of them yet. Oh, I've suddenly thought of a story. It feels very flashy...

The above are all my sincere and heartfelt words. Not one bit of it is feigned.

I wish everyone good health and that everything goes as you wish.

These words seem very cliché, but they are also sincere.

Translator's Afterword:

Three years ago, in the May of 2015, Binggo and friends began to translate *Way of Choices*, introducing it and its characters to the English-speaking world, and to me. I remember reading those translations for the first time and falling in love with the characters, the poetic descriptions, the sedate pace that took the time to appreciate the beauty of the world in which the characters lived. Over the years, *Way of Choices* was in the hands of multiple translators, and I would like to thank all of them: Binggo and friends for first taking up this wonderful novel, bbkgs for stepping in when Binggo dropped it, and Pipipingu for bringing the novel to Gravity Tales. I would also like to thank Michyrr, who was the faithful editor of *Way of Choices* for the great majority of the novel, and who was never afraid to give his opinion when my prose was ambiguous or off. Of course, I also have to thank Mao Ni for writing this work and the readers for enjoying this work with me.

I suppose I'll mimic Mao Ni and write out my thoughts in a list:

1. I intentionally didn't put any footnotes in the last few chapters so as to not detract from the reading experience, so I'll just put those footnotes here. Chen Changsheng's final attack is based on the Guardians of the Four Directions: The White Tiger in the West, the Azure Dragon of the East, the Vermillion Bird of the South, and the Black Turtle of the North. Chen Changsheng seems to have omitted the Black Turtle, however. Prince Chen Liu's last conversation with Chen Changsheng was a reference to how Prince Chen Liu is based on Li Longji. Historically, Li Longji was Emperor Xuanzong, who is often praised as presiding over a golden age of Chinese history. The Man in the Iron Mask refers to the famous prisoner who was rumored to be the twin of French King Louis XIV. Cardinal Richelieu was a powerful minister under the French King Louis XIII. I suppose this would put the Sacred Light Continent as 17th Century Europe?

2. I found it amusing that Mao Ni poked fun at his own choice of an open ending for Way of Choices while ending Black Robe's story.

3. I once saw a comment when I posted one of the title poems for Way of Choices that wondered why someone would quote the words of a monster like Mao Zedong. After some thought, I realized that the life of Mao Zedong is actually a very appropriate example for this book: an old man who was once a young man with ideals. While he was a hero in the early stages, he was a monster in his later life, perhaps like the old Demon Lord? In short, he's a stark example of what happens when the old remain in power for too long, when one begins to focus on the ends and not the means.

4. My favorite character was the Divine Empress, so I'm happy to see that she's back in goat form. I wonder what she was doing outside Xuelao City though? Was she going to come to the rescue if Chen Changsheng was in danger? The world may never know.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of you once again for accompanying me on this journey. May all your choices follow your heart.

Sincerely,

Hypersheep

Editor's Note:

Thanks for coming on this journey with us.

–Michyrr

Table of Contents

[Way of Choices](#)

[Synopsis](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Chapter 1101 – An Agreement on Ten Years](#)

[Chapter 1102 – Moving the Body Like a Sword](#)

[Chapter 1103 – Meeting on the Path and Exchanging Hatred Through the Eyes](#)

[Chapter 1104 – We've All Killed Before](#)

[Chapter 1105 – A Strength Above Laws](#)

[Chapter 1106 – The Meaning of Choices](#)

[Chapter 1107 – A Broken Tree](#)

[Chapter 1108 – 6666](#)

[Chapter 1109 – The Nobleman Conceals Weapons on His Body and Waits for the Proper Time to Move](#)

[Chapter 1110 – When the Great Sun Comes, Who Can Be at Ease?](#)

[Chapter 1111 – Do You Dare Ask Where the Swords Are?](#)

[Chapter 1112 – They're Everywhere](#)

[Chapter 1113 – Maple Forest Pavilion](#)

[Chapter 1114 – Shang Xingzhou Has Lost](#)

[Chapter 1115 – Who Has Won?](#)

[Chapter 1116 – The Meaning of This Fight](#)

[Chapter 1117 – Everything Regarding Chen Shengsheng](#)

[Chapter 1118 – Let Everyone See](#)

[Chapter 1119 – The Generation of Youths](#)

[Chapter 1120 – The Most Authentic Clan of Sovereigns](#)

[Chapter 1121 – So It Was You](#)

[Chapter 1122 – Everything Is Fake](#)

[Chapter 1123 – If You Were Chusu](#)

[Chapter 1124 – The Eight Great Mountain Men](#)

[Chapter 1125 – Black Robe's Lethal Trap](#)

[Chapter 1126 – Drawing the Sword and Sheathing the Sword](#)

[Chapter 1127 – My Arrows](#)

[Chapter 1128 – The Unbridled Spear and Heartbreaking Arrow](#)

[Chapter 1129 – The Death of My Mount Yanzhi](#)

[Chapter 1130 – The Twenty-Ninth Night](#)

[Chapter 1131 – A Know-Nothing Parting](#)

[Chapter 1132 – Cong Province](#)

[Chapter 1133 – Xunyang](#)

[Chapter 1134 – Luoyang](#)

[Chapter 1135 – Respectful Praise](#)

[Chapter 1136 – Leaving Alive](#)

[Chapter 1137 – The Distant Horsehooves, the Songs of Grief](#)

[Chapter 1138 – Since We Have to Go Sooner or Later, Why Not Go Sooner?](#)

[Chapter 1139 – I Want to Go to Xuelao City](#)

[Chapter 1140 – Bird Mountain Bright](#)

[Chapter 1141 – The Heaven Shrouding Sword](#)

[Chapter 1142 – Wang Po Has Come](#)

[Chapter 1143 – Fighting the Demon Commander](#)

[Chapter 1144 – Preposterous Order](#)

[Chapter 1145 – The Straightforward You and Me, Him and Her on the Paper](#)

[Chapter 1146 – Idly Listening to Falling Flowers While Sending a Sword](#)

[Chapter 1147 – Tang Thirty-Six with an Unrelenting Fever](#)

[Chapter 1148 – Infiltrating Xuelao City](#)

[Chapter 1149 – First Snow](#)

[Chapter 1150 – One Carriage, One Painting](#)

[Chapter 1151 – Fire Burning Sangharama Temple](#)

[Chapter 1152 – The Unaging Mountain in the Tide](#)

[Chapter 1153 – The Most Blessed Young Daoist Boy](#)

[Chapter 1154 – The Fisherman by Xining Village's Stream Uses His Spear](#)

[Chapter 1155 – The Elderly Youth](#)

[Chapter 1156 – Where the Bright Moon Was Back Then](#)

[Chapter 1157 – How Deep Is the Deep, Deep Courtyard](#)

[Chapter 1158 – The Happy Tang Old Master](#)

[Chapter 1159 – The Swamp of Blood](#)

[Chapter 1160 – A Fire Burns in the Heart of Every Person](#)

[Chapter 1161 – When the General Is Abroad](#)

[Chapter 1162 – The Last Supper and Conversation](#)

[Chapter 1163 – The Troubles Encountered When Entering the City](#)

[Chapter 1164 – The Prince of Zhongshan's Choice](#)

[Chapter 1165 – The Returned Prince Chen Liu and Him](#)

[Chapter 1166 – I'll Stop Here](#)

[Chapter 1167 – Who Are You?](#)

[Chapter 1168 – Suddenly Turning My Head, I Find That Person Standing Under the Dim Light](#)

[Chapter 1169 – A Bright and Sunny Day](#)

[Chapter 1170 – You've Lost](#)

[Chapter 1171 – The Origin of the Demon Race](#)

[Chapter 1172 – The Secret of the Stars](#)

[Chapter 1173 – We Exchanged Letters](#)

[Chapter 1174 – I've Been Waiting for You for a Long Time](#)

[Chapter 1175 – You Are the Lighthouse](#)

[Chapter 1176 – Light, Falling on Your Face](#)

[Chapter 1177 – Her Answer](#)

[Chapter 1178 – One Sword Rises from the Earth](#)

[Chapter 1179 – One Sword Comes from the Heavens](#)

[Chapter 1180 – The Death of Black Robe](#)

[Chapter 1181 – What a Fine Autumn](#)

[Chapter 1182 – Journeying to the Sacred Light Continent](#)

[Chapter 1183 – The Path of Concealed Divinity](#)

[Afterword](#)